Jordan Times
An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الرأي»

Ross does not plan trip to Middle East this week

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The U.S. coordinator for the Middle East, Dennis Ross, has no immediate plans to travel to the region to meet Israeli and Palestinian officials, the State Department said Friday. Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat said earlier in the West Bank town of Jericho that Mr. Ross would start the new mediation mission next Thursday or Friday. "He has no plans to do so at the present time," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said. "At the right time, when it's useful, I am sure that we'll have trips to the Middle East either by the secretary of state or Dennis Ross but we are not in a position to announce one now," he added.

Sanaa not to allow visits by Israelis of Yemeni origin

SANAA (AFP) — Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Iryani said Friday during a news conference in Sanaa that visits by Israeli Jews of Yemeni origin "had been under discussion," without giving details. "But negative developments in the peace process hardly encourage normalisation on humanitarian matters," he said. Mr. Iryani said there were about 500,000 Jews of Yemeni origin living in Israel. At the beginning of April, Yemen denied any contacts with Israel regarding normalisation. The denial followed news from Israel Radio of secret contacts between Israel and Yemen to establish diplomatic relations. About 500 Jews still live in Yemen.

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U.N. General Assembly condemns Israeli 'illegal' settlement policies in West Bank

Israel given 2 months to stop settlement building

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The . U.N. General Assembly on Friday overwhelmingly approved a resolution condemning Israel's "illegal" settlement policies and called for symbolic punitive measures.

The vote in emergency session was 134 states in favour, with the United States, Israel and Micronesia voting against the resolution.

The measure demands the "immediate and full cessation" of construction of a controversial Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem.

Despite strong support for the measure, 11 nations — including Australia, Canada and Norway — abstained from voting. Germany broke ranks with its 14 European Union (EU) colleagues and abstained from voting, stating that the text was unbalanced.

Palestine observer to the United Nations Nasser Al Kidwa, whose delegation drafted the resolution submitted to the emergency session, expressed "full satisfaction" with the result.

He suggested that "huge pressure was put on every single member state" by Washington, which had also lobbied hard against convening the special emergency session, the first in 15 years.

The resolution "condemns the construction by Israel, the occupying power, of a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim to the south of Arab East Jerusalem and all other illegal Israeli actions in all the occupied terrorities."

It also urges all states to stop "all forms of assistance and support for illegal Israeli activities," notably in building settlements in Arab areas.

But "this doesn't commit anyone to do anything," one diplomat commented, referring to the fact that General Assembly resolutions are non-binding.

The resolution requests U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to report back "within two months" on whether the Israeli government has stopped construction of the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement.

The text effectively gives the Israeli government two months to comply with the demand for a halt to the settlement construction, or face further action by the U.N.

"The whole international community is waiting for the Israeli response," Nasser Al Kidwa said. He refused comment on the significance of the 11 abstentions.

Antonio Monteiro, Portuguese ambassador and president of the Security Council was disappointed with Germany's decision to abstain. "Any time that you don't have a common position in the union it is bad for the union," Mr. Monteiro said.

Other European ambassadors played down Bonn's decision, stressing that German Deputy Permanent Representative Gerhard Henze, in explaining his vote to the assembly, had reaffirmed German solidarity with the EU's opposition to Israeli settlements.

Egyptian Ambassador Nabil Al Araby said that the abstentions were "for different reasons, not on the substance" of the text.

U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson commented to reporters that the Palestinians were forced to water down the text in order to win support. The original language called for broader economic sanctions.

"The United States voted against, because we believe it will not be helpful to the peace process," Mr. Richardson said.

But Mr. Al Kidwa said that "the message which was sent today is a very powerful one" as the resolution was adopted in an emergency session and would consquently carry more weight than a normal assembly resolution.

Such sessions may be called under the "uniting for peace" formula, invoked when the U.N. Security Council has failed in its duties of international peace and security.

It took the Palestinians three weeks to gather enough support for the emergency session. The session follows two U.S. vetoes in the Security Council which prevented adopting resolutions calling for a halt to the settlement construction.



An Israeli soldier points his rifle at Palestinians as an elderly Palestinian lifts his arms to tell marching protesters to stop, on Friday, as they approach closer to a Jewish settlement. Palestinians claim a road under construction which is to connect five Jewish settlements is an attempt to expand the Jewish settlements and constitutes expropriation of Arab lands. Israeli soldiers fired rubber bullets at the Palestinians and there were reports that four Palestinians were wounded (Reuters photo)

Israeli army, Palestinians clash over Gaza settlement expansion

KFAR KEDUMIM (Agencies) — Israeli troops fired rubber bullets and stun grenades Friday to disperse hundreds of Palestinians protesting against a land grab by Jewish settlers.

Four protesters were hurt by rubber bullets. The clash erupted near the Palestinian village of Kfar Kedumim. About 200 villagers marched towards a nearby hilltop where they said Jewish settlers seized 15 acres earlier this month and planted trees. Some threw stones at Israeli soldiers who fired rubber bullets and stun grenades to keep the crowd back.

In another land dispute in the Gaza Strip, Israelis and Palestinians confronted each other with bulldozers, and at one point Israeli troops fired in the air to break up a Palestinian protest.

The dispute began Thursday afternoon when Israeli bulldozers levelled a 1.5 acre-strip of Mediterranean beach for what Israel Radio said was the construction of a military observation tower.

Palestinians said the land belonged to Palestinian farmers, and was being seized for the expansion of Kfar Yam, a nearby Jewish settlement.

Sometime after the Israeli bulldozers began working, Palestinian protesters drove two bulldozers of their own to the scene to try and stop the Israelis' heavy machinery, said Khaled Abu Ula, a colonel in the Palestinian police.

Colonel Abu Ula said Israeli troops arrested the two bulldozer drivers, and shot in the air to disperse dozens of protesters on foot who had accompanied them.

On Friday, some 150 Palestinian protesters returned to the site, staged a sit-in and set up five protest tents. Israel brought in a tank as reinforcement, but the Israeli bulldozers did not resume work.

Two-thirds of the Gaza Strip are under Palestinian control. In the remaining third, including a Jewish settlement bloc, Israeli troops remain in charge of security.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank town of Hebron, a dozen Palestinian teenagers threw stones at Jewish settlers. Israeli troops quickly chased away the stone throwers, and there were no injuries.

U.S. warns Iraq on 'no-fly' zone

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The United States again cautioned Iraq on Thursday against any move to increase its forces in southern Iraq under the guise of flying pilgrims home from Saudi Arabia through a "no-fly" zone.

"I think they (Iraqis) are trying to hide behind religion or to manipulate the Hajj pilgrimage for political reasons. We are not going to play that game," U.S. Defence Department spokesman Ken Bacon told reporters. .

Iraqi helicopters started on Friday to fly home pilgrims from the Saudi border through a U.S. patrolled exclusion zone in the south, the official news agency (INA) said.

A first helicopter carrying "sick, elderly or weary" pilgrims took off from the southern border region of Jodaidat Arar to the town of Mosul in northern Iraq, it said, without giving the number of passengers.

"The operation to transport pilgrims to other governorates will continue," the agency added. A second group of returning pilgrims was expected at Jodaidat Arar, three kilometres (two miles) from the border, on Saturday.

Official Baghdad Radio and Youth TV, which is run by President Saddam Hussein's son Uday, interrupted its programmes to announce the news of the first flight and played patriotic songs.

President Bill Clinton said on Tuesday that U.S. and allied warplanes would not halt Iraq's planned helicopter movement of about 100 Iraqi pilgrims home from Mecca through a "no-fly" zone set up by Western powers in southern Iraq in 1992.

But "we have also made very clear that we continue to enforce the 'no-fly, no-drive' zone, which is designed to prevent the Iraqis from accumulating military power in the southern part of their country," Mr. Bacon stressed on Thursday.

"We are certain that, given our vigilant policing of the 'no-fly' zone, we will be able to do that," he said.

Iraq says it does not recognise the "no-fly" zone and warned the United States this week not to attack helicopters in the area.

"I think Iraq is trying to make a mountain out of a molehill here," Mr. Bacon told reporters at the Pentagon's regular news briefing.

He said Iraq had moved about 10 helicopters and several buses to a point near the Saudi border to pick up the pilgrims, who apparently had not yet arrived from Mecca.

"I think we should try to keep this whole incident in perspective. They sent down a handful of helicopters to pick up a small number of pilgrims," Mr. Bacon said.

The area was designated as a "no-fly" zone and placed off limits to Iraqi aircraft by Washington and Western allies in 1992 to protect Iraqi Shiites who mounted a failed rebellion against Iraq's president, Saddam Hussein, following the Gulf war.

In defiance of other Gulf war sanctions, Iraq flew a civilian plane to Saudi Arabia on April 9 carrying 104 elderly and sick pilgrims to Mecca for the Hajj pilgrimage.

The U.N. Security Council issued a statement calling on Iraq not to fly more planes without its consent, but stopped short of calling the April 9 flight a breach of the embargo.

U.S. allies in the Gulf war have taken a more flexible stance on such issues recently and have been less insistent than Washington on strict enforcement of post-war sanctions.

U.S. officials have said that if Baghdad was genuinely interested in the pilgrims, it would have sought a U.N. exemption to travel through the "no-fly" zone.



Muasher appointed envoy to U.S.

AMMAN (J.T.) — Former Minister of Information Marwan Muasher has been nominated as Jordan's ambassador to Washington, informed sources told the Jordan Times Friday.

Dr. Muasher, who served in the government of Abdul Karim Kabariti from February 1996 until it resigned in March this year, was Jordan's first ambassador to Israel after the signing of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in October 1994.

Dr. Muasher, 40, graduated from Purdue University, U.S.A. with three engineering degrees. He also holds a doctorate degree in computer sciences.

Dr. Muasher served as director of the Jordan Information Bureau in Washington, D.C., and spokesman of the Jordanian negotiating team with Israel.

Train explosion kills 21 in Algeria

ALGIERS (AP) — A bomb hidden under the railway tracks blew up a train south of Algiers on Friday morning, killing at least 21 people and injuring another 20, security forces said.

The attack capped a week of bloodletting, including three village massacres, ahead of June 5 legislative elections. Some 440 people are known to have been killed over the past four weeks, with most attacks occurring in the region south of Algiers.

Some 160 people have been killed over the past four days.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the Friday morning train attack, but past violence has been blamed on Islamist insurgents waging a five-year battle to topple Algeria's military-backed regime. at least 60,000 people have been killed.

The train attack occurred at 8 a.m. At Gue de Constantine, just south of Algiers, on a line running between the capital and Blida, about 50 kilometres south, authorities said. The bomb was hidden under the tracks, they added.

Further details were not immediately available.

Islamist militants have a strong foothold in the Blida region, which is also the site of a major army garrison that covers the capital.

Villages that have been sites of recent bloody massacres are located in the region. Attackers have used sabers, knives, pitch forks and shovels to decapitate and kill.

An anti-government insurgency has been underway in this north African nation since the army cancelled a January 1992 parliamentary vote to stop the rise to power of the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front.

The June voting will be the first parliamentary elections since then. Parties based on religion are barred from the contest.

The new violence appeared to be a clear effort by insurgents to derail the elections. Algerian authorities claimed again this week that only "residual terrorism" remains.

President Liamine Zeroual has remodelled the political landscape to assure that this time the elections do not boomerang against the regime. A constitutional revision, voted in a November referendum, banned political parties based on religion, language and regionalism. It also added a second-chamber to parliament, with the president selecting one-third of the new chamber's members, giving Mr. Zeroual effective veto power.

The train attack came one day before Air Algiers is to resume flights to Paris after a more than two-year lapse. France, Algeria's former colonial ruler, cancelled flights after guerrillas hijacked an Air France plane Christmas 1994, killing three people.

The Armed Islamic Group, claiming responsibility for the hijacking and some of a series of deadly bomb attacks in France in 1995-96, has said it wants to punish Paris for its aid to the Algerian regime.

Turkey's government-army row hightens; investors dump shares fast in expectation of coalition collapse

ISTANBUL (Agencies) — Turkey's ruling Islamists, locked in a political war of attrition with the secularist armed forces, on Thursday threatened to try an outspoken commander for defaming Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan.

Justice Minister Sevket Kazan, of the Islamist Welfare Party, said he had directed prosecutors to weigh charges against the general who denounced the prime minister as a "pimp" for his admiration of the austere Islam of the Saudi monarchy.

"I am talking about the concept of crime. The prosecutors will investigate if there is a crime or not," the state-run Anatolian agency quoted Mr. Kazan as saying.

He said television coverage of anti-Islamist comments last week by General Osman Ozbek, head of the gendarmerie in the eastern region of Erzurum, indicated the law had been broken.

"If it is true, there are three clear crimes in the speech we saw on television," Mr. Kazan said. He said the general may have defamed Mr. Erbakan, Saudi King Fahd and breached military rules.

General Ozbek denounced Mr. Erbakan for accepting the hospitality of Saudi Arabia's conservative monarch during his Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca this month.

"If he were a real man he wouldn't go as a guest of a king like that. I do not care whether he is prime minister or minister of whatever... the pimp," General Ozbek said.

"Some of those making use of democracy are trying to come to power by cutting throats as in Algeria," he said in a reference to violence in the north African country.

The reverberations from a military establishment that has toppled civilian rule three times in the last four decades exposed the deep fault lines in the coalition between Mr. Erbakan's Islamists and the secularists of Tansu Ciller's True Path Party.

They also set the stage for a potential showdown on Saturday, when the military-dominated National Security Council is expected to repeat demands to Mr. Erbakan's recalcitrant cabinet for an anti-Islamist crackdown.

"The political picture reveals the government is now finished," commentator Bilal Cetin said. "The military does not want it, even other institutions do not want it."

In what was widely seen as public endorsement for General Ozbek, army commander Hikmet Koksal refused demands by the ruling Welfare Party to rein in the soldiers: "There is no way we can zip anybody's mouth."

Senior politicians from across the spectrum, eager to head off any possibility of direct military intervention, scrambled to paste together a workable government formula to supplant Mr. Erbakan's coalition, formed last June.

Main opposition leader Mesut Yilmaz floated two variants, each by-passing the party chiefs, whose squabbling has doomed past attempts at a cabinet that would exclude the Islamists.

The proposals, Mr. Yilmaz told the daily Hurriyet in comments published on Thursday, were designed to lead the country to early elections in 1998 or 1999. The next scheduled general polls are ostensibly set for December of 2000.

Meanwhile, elements of Mr. Erbakan's Welfare Party, as well as ministers from Ms. Ciller's True Path, are openly talking about scrapping their coalition.

President Suleiman Demirel, deposed twice in the past by the army, has also jumped in to suggest that early elections might offer the best way out of the current deadlock

The escalation of rhetoric from both sides has sent politicians running for cover and investors looking to bail out of volatile markets amid fears of a government collapse or even fresh military intervention.

Investors dumped shares on the Istanbul stock exchange Thursday, sending the main index down almost seven per cent at midday. It later recovered somewhat to end the day down almost five per cent.

Investors voted with their pocketbooks, sending Istanbul shares down 6.85 per cent in morning trade. The main index bounced off its lows to close off 4.9 per cent, at 1,457.

"The dominant view (in the market) is that the government will fall," said Korhan Biricik from Deha Securities, adding a drop to around 1,350 was possible by the weekend.

On Friday, police detained 15 people for their involvement in a play depicting Islamists emb-roiled in a struggle against a staunchly secular army. The scenario deeply offended the armed forces.

Turkey's military sees itself as the defender of the country's secular traditions. The play was staged earlier this month in three cities by the National Youth Foundation, the youth wing of the governing Islamist Welfare Party.

In the play, the hero calls for armed resistance against a military trying to suppress the role of religion in Turkey.

The Anatolia News Agency said police rounded up people involved in the play in all three cities and brought them to Ankara. The detainees could face charges of inciting an uprising against the armed forces, which is punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

Escalating tensions between the army and the Islamist government have raised fears of a coup. Turkey has had three military coups in less than 40 years.

Yemen to head to polls hoping for economic relief

SANAA (R) — Yemenis, still recovering from a bitter 1994 civil war, are due to cast votes on Sunday in parliamentary elections that officials hope will bring political stability and help lure foreign investment.

Western diplomats expect President Ali Abdullah Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) to return to power.

Officials and diplomats said the governing party's biggest political challenge was not gaining seats in the chamber but projecting abroad an image of democracy that will build investor confidence needed to develop the country's limping economy.

Yemen, a small independent oil producer, is one of the Arab World's poorest countries. The government is banking on economic reforms agreed with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to help ease widespread hardships.

The reforms are a sensitive issue in a land where marginal increases in the price of bread or petrol can unleash unrest, diplomats and Yemenis said.

"The big issue is the economy. We have big economic problems. The civil war cost $11 billion," Mohammad Al-Tayeb, a member of the GPC's political department, told Reuters.

Yemen is eager to promote tourism and persuade the world it is safe to do business here despite a spate of kidnappings.

In recent years, Yemeni tribes with grievances against the government have kidnapped scores of foreign tourists and diplomats to use as bargaining chips.

"One big problem is the kidnappings because they get publicity in the West. The Yemenis have to struggle with this problem," said an election observer. The country is also still paying a heavy political price from the war in which a secessionist bid by the South was crushed by Northern forces loyal to President Saleh.

The main opposition Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), some of whose former leaders launched the southern separatist campaign that sparked the war, and three other parties said they would boycott the polls to protest against alleged irregularities.

They also said the boycott was fuelled by deep resentment that the government had failed to deliver on promises to achieve national reconciliation with the South.

Despite what Southern opposition figures say is an uneasy unity imposed by the North, the Sanaa government is relying on the country's fragile democracy to try and deliver what counts most on the streets — salvation from poverty.

"Saleh is very anxious to show that the structure of democracy exists in Yemen," said a Western diplomat.

Diplomats and officials say democracy is the only way to keep together a country with a history of revolutions, border clashes, civil wars, political assassinations, riots and often bloody tribal feuds.

"We will kill each other if there is no democracy in Yemen. Democracy protects society." Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdullah Ahmad Ghanem told Reuters.

A total of 2,306 candidates, including 17 women, are seeking 301 parliamentary seats from 12 parties or as independents.

They range from a popular Yemeni singer, to the president's son to Parliament Speaker Sheikh Abdullah Ben Hussein Al Ahmar, known for his mediating skills between the government and volatile tribes in times of crisis.

The Republic of Yemen was formed in 1990 by the merger of the conservative North Yemen and the Marxist South following hundreds of years of separation.

The first general elections in a united Yemen were held in 1993. The YSP won 50 seats in the outgoing assembly, which is dominated by the GPC and its Islamist junior coalition partner the Islah Party.

International observers are in Yemen to monitor the polls.



Armed Yemeni men on Friday sit next to veiled Yemeni women during a campaign rally in Sanaa, for Balqeis, one of seventeen women candidates running for parliament (Reuters photo)

Yemen officials say Saudis play role in kidnaps

SANAA (R) — Saudi Arabia has played a role in kidnappings of foreigners in Yemen in an attempt to undermine political stability and taint its democratic experiment, Yemeni officials charged on Friday.

"The kidnappings are being carried out by Yemenis but the money is definitely coming from the Saudis," one Yemeni official said. He requested anonymity, as did other officials interviewed.

"Many kidnappers have confessed to the Yemeni authorities that they have received financial support from Yemeni opposition elements based in Saudi Arabia. These people are tools of the Saudis and there is no way they can act without Saudi approval," the official said.

He said Yemeni officials had questioned Saudi Arabia about its alleged role and received promises that Yemeni opposition elements inside the kingdom would be reined in.

"The Saudis said that they had given opposition elements money but that they did not know what it was being used for," the official added.

Saudi officials in Riyadh could not be reached for comment on the allegation.

Yemeni tribes with grievances against the government or foreign oil firms have kidnapped scores of tourists, diplomats or other foreigners in recent years to use as bargaining chips.

Yemeni officials, eager for foreign investment, are trying to portray Yemen as a safe tourism destination and place to go on business.

Prime Minister Abdul Aziz Abdul Ghani told a news conference on Wednesday that Yemen had uncovered evidence that many foreign countries were behind the kidnappings. He did not name any of them and refused to say whether Saudi Arabia had played a role.

The Yemeni officials said Saudi Arabia's alleged involvement in the abductions was fuelled by Saudi anxiety about Yemen's general elections.

The impoverished Arab state on the southern border of the world's largest oil producer and exporter is due on Sunday to hold its first general election since a 1994 civil war.

Said one Yemeni official: "The Saudis want to show their people that democracy in neighbouring Yemen will only lead to instability such as the kidnappings."

"Yemeni officials have told the Saudis that they would be exposed if the problem continued. But we really can't do much because we are trying to improve ties with Saudi Arabia," the official said.

Some 800,000 Yemeni workers, who sent home badly needed remittances, were expelled from Saudi Arabia during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis because of Yemeni support for Iraq.

Since then, Yemen has been trying to boost ties with the Saudis and the other oil-rich Gulf Arab states.

Saudi Arabia and Yemen also had several minor clashes in a border area potentially rich in oil and gas before they signed a memorandum of understanding in 1995 to resolve the dispute.

One Yemeni official said that Saudi Arabia had told Yemen there was no need for it to hold the general elections.

Security officials told Reuters that Yemeni authorities had recently seized two trucks coming from Saudi Arabia loaded with leaflets and books calling on Yemenis to boycott the elections and stage demonstrations.

"A senior Yemeni official telephoned a Saudi prince and thanked him for the gift," said an official. "We have told the Saudis that Yemen's democracy is not for export."

W. Bank Samaritans caught between Israel, Palestinians

NABLUS (R) — Palestinian officials slammed Israel on Friday for granting citizenship to some 95 Samaritans who live in the West Bank Palestinian self-rule enclave of Nablus.

"I think this violates the (peace) agreement," Palestinian Civil Affairs Minister Jamil Tarifi told Reuters. "During the peace negotiations, the Israelis didn't consider the Samaritans as Jews and considered them as West Bank residents."

A representative of the Samaritan sect, Farouk Samri, told Reuters that since October 1996 some 95 elderly members of the Nablus Samaritan community had received Israeli citizenship documents only "for human and economic reasons."

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported that members of the Nablus community took Israeli identity cards in order to keep contact with the Samaritans who live in Holon in central Israel.

The Samaritans, tracing their history back more than 3,600 years, consist of 620 people, half in Nablus and half in Holon. They observe some Jewish rituals but do not regard themselves as Jews.

Spokesmen for Israel's interior ministry, which issued the citizenship documents, were unavailable to comment.

The Samaritans have a representative on the Palestinian Legislative Council, Saloum Cahen, 75.

"We are working on the other side, with the part of the community in Holon, trying to make a Palestinian ID card for them to join us in Palestine," Mr. Cahen said.

"We are still connected strongly with the Palestinian community, the Palestinian state, because here are our roots."

Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) signed an interim peace deal in 1993 providing for limited Palestinian self-rule in parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Final peace talks, which Palestinians hope will result in an independent state, have yet to resume under Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu who took office in June 1996.

Pilgrimage cancelled for Greek Cypriots

NICOSIA (R) — An Easter pilgrimage by Greek Cypriots to Turkish-held northern Cyprus on Sunday has been cancelled because of terms set by Turkish Cypriot authorities, Greek Cypriot officials said on Friday.

"It is not going to go ahead unless there are some drastic changes," said Takis Christopoulos, presidential commissioner for humanitarian affairs in the Greek Cypriot-led government.

Between 600 and 800 people were scheduled to travel to the Turkish-held north of the island on a pilgrimage to the monastery of Apostolos Andreas on Sunday for the Greek Orthodox Easter.

It was to be a first such visit since the island's division in 1974 after a Turkish invasion sparked after a brief coup by the military rule of Greece.

More than 2,000 people had initially applied to go to the monastery.

But Turkish Cypriot authorities said no journalists or members of support organisations for some 400 Greek Cypriots still living in that part of the island's north could go, Mr. Christopoulos said.

Efforts through the United Nations for the Turkish Cypriots to lift the restrictions failed, he said.

Netanyahu to help resolve Christian-Muslim dispute

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu, at odds with the Palestinians over his building of a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem, on Thursday pledged to help resolve a Christian-Muslim property dispute in the Arab half of the city.

"Mr. Netanyahu said that the government cannot accept any change in the status quo in Jerusalem," said a statement released by Mr. Netanyahu's office after he met Christian leaders.

"You are among friends and the government will handle the matter with utmost responsibility," it quoted him as saying.

The Greek Orthodox and Armenian Patriarchs and representatives of the Franciscans, the Custodia de Terra Sancta, attended the meeting called by Mr. Netanyahu after he received a letter from them complaining about the Waqf or Islamic trust, his office said.

It said the Christians had complained that the Waqf's "illegal work" at the Al Khanqa Mosque next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem's old city had appropriated two rooms belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church.

Franciscan Father Halim Najeem, who attended the meeting, confirmed a letter on the dispute had been sent to Mr. Netanyahu but refused to discuss Thursday's meeting. Greek Orthodox and Armenian officials were not immediately available to comment.

Muslim Mufti of Palestine Ikrimah Sabri told Reuters: "The two rooms are part of Al Khanqa mosque, whoever sees the site concludes that the two rooms are part of one building."

Mr. Sabri, who is a Palestinian National Authority (PNA) appointee, said the Waqf formed a committee to discuss the issue with the church.

"I don't know the reason behind going to the Israeli prime minister," he said.

On April 13, Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Timothy accused the Waqf of seizing the rooms. He said if the sides failed to resolve the dispute they would ask for Israeli arbitration.

Peacemaking between the PNA and Israel ground to a halt in March when Mr. Netanyahu gave the green light for a 6,500-unit Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Israel captured East Jerusalem in the 1967 Middle East war and vows to keep it.

Accused Egyptian spy pleads not guilty

CAIRO (R) — An Israeli textile worker pleaded not guilty on Thursday at the start of his trial in Cairo on charges of spying for Israel, saying he did not even know what the word espionage meant.

Azam Azam, a 35-year-old chief mechanic, is accused along with main defendant Egyptian Imad Abdul Hamid Ismail of helping the Israeli intelligence service Mossad obtain economic information about Egypt.

They could face a maximum sentence of 15 years hard labour and imprisonment. Azam's lawyer Farid Al Deeb told reporters.

The two men, wearing white prison uniforms, were handcuffed to policemen and kept inside a cage in a crowded courtroom in south Cairo's Supreme State Security Court.

Mr. Deeb said the charge sheet referred only to economic espionage and the maximum penalty was 15 years, compared with life imprisonment for other forms of spying.

The judge later adjourned the hearings because Ismail's lawyer failed to appear. The next session will be on May 18.

The prosecution alleges that Mossad wanted Ismail to provide them with information about Egyptian factories in the industrial satellite city named the 10th of Ramadan.

Azam's alleged role in the espionage case was to deliver to Ismail women's underwear inscribed with invisible ink.

"I am a man who came to Egypt to work, not to spy. I have never heard of the word spying. I am innocent," Azam told the judge when asked to state a plea.

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel. 773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Cartoon — Mickey & Donald Adventures
14:30.....Cartoon — Moomin
15:00 French Programmes
16:00 Gillette World Sport
16:30 Doc. — Innovations
17:00 Tilt
17:25 Drama — Blue Heelers
18:00 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Hangin' With Mr. Cooper
20:00 Doc. — Magazine-01
20:30 Prism
21:10 Science Fiction — "Time Trax"
22:00 News in English
22:25 MacGyver
23:15 Concert — Hymn For Peace

PRAYER TIMES

04:27.....Fajr
05:51.....(Sunrise) Duha
12:33.....Dhuhr
16:12.....'Asr
19:16 Maghreb
20:40'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh. Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunication Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661656.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Temperatures are expected to drop gradually and humidity to rise. Moderate weather conditions will prevail with winds northwesterly moderate to active.On Sunday and Monday temperatures tend to drop slightly becoming cool at night. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.,
Amman 13/25
Aqaba 18/31
Deserts 10/28
Jordan Valley 18/30

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 32 Aqaba 37 Humidity readings: Amman 41 per cent, Aqaba 23 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Yousef Rashid 896301
Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab ..7588 48
Dr. Khalil Jbali 740740
Dr. Walid Al Masri 675485
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy.....637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'amneh 250080
Al Quds pharmacy(—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Walid Halaseh 982799
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency ...199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital..667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986732
Al Hikam Modern Hospital(09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital(02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. **(08)53200** where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone **(08) 52700** or **(08) 523250.**

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:00 Damascus (add) (RJ)
09:00 Jeddah (RJ)
09:45 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
10:25 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
10:30 New Delhi (RJ)
11:05 Beirut (RJ)
12:15 Colombo (RJ)
13:00 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
17:20 Cairo (RJ)
19:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
19:10 London, Berlin (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
21:00 Vienna (RJ)
22:00 Paris, (add) (RJ)
23:00 Brussels (RJ)
23:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
01:05.....London (add) (RJ)
01:45 Paris (RJ)
02:35 Larnaca (RJ)
02:45 Jakarta (add) (RJ)
06:00 Bangkok (RJ)
08:45 Bangkok, Dubai (RJ

Other Flights
06:10 Jakarta (GA)
07:05 ..London, Damascus (BA)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
13:10 ..Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
19:15 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
20:10.....London (GA)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
23:25 Beirut (ME)
23:45 Amsterdam (KL)
01:00 Cairo (MS)
03:00 Rome (AZ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
03:30 Abu Dhabi, Jakarta (add) (RJ)
04:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
04:00 Jeddah (RJ)
04:00 Bangkok (add) (RJ)
06:15 ...Marka Aqaba (add) (RJ)
06:20 Beirut (RJ)
11:30 Paris (add) (RJ)
12:30 Vienna (RJ)
12:45 Brussels (RJ)
12:45 Aqaba, Paris (RJ)
13:00.....Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
14:00 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
13:15 Cairo (RJ)
14:00 London (RJ)
15:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
17:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
19:30 Paris (add) (RJ)
20:25 Dubai, Bangkok (add) (RJ)
21:30 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:50 Bombay (RJ)
22:30 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
23:30 Larnaca (RJ)
01:00 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
02:35 Marchester (add) (RJ)
02:45 Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)
03:45 Jeddah (RJ)
08:00 Aqaba (RJ)

Other Flights
04:00 Rome (AZ)
06:50 Larnaca (CY)
07:10 London (GA)
08:10 ..Damascus, London (BA)
14:00 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Riyadh (SV)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
20:15 Dubai (EK)
21:10 Jakarta (GA)
23:55 Damascus, Paris (AF)
00:25 Amsterdam (KL)
02:00 Cairo (MS)
04:00 Athens (OA)
07:00 Beirut (ME)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damscus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

Terry Fox Run held to benefit cancer research; *Queen, Prince Ra'd participate*

AMMAN (J.T.) — Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, the Annual Terry Fox Run — the largest single day fund-raiser for cancer research in the world — was launched Friday at Al Hussein Sports City. The funds raised by the Terry Fox Run, organised by the Canadian Embassy and Al Amal Centre, will be donated to Al Amal Centre for cancer research.

The 10-kilometre run, in which Queen Noor and HRH Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid participated, ended at Al Amal Cancer Centre, where the Queen cut the ribbon to signal the full operation of all of the centre's departments, according to a Royal Court statement.

An official opening is scheduled for a later date.

The Queen also presented keys to prominent media personalities in recognition of their support of the centre.

Al Amal Centre is the first comprehensive centre for cancer treatment in Jordan and the region, the statement said.

Its services include screening, early direction and treatment in addition to public awareness and education regarding cancer prevention and control.

The centre has begun its gradual operation with the women's screening clinic, stop smoking clinic, healthy diet and weight control clinic.

Terry Fox, a young 18 year old Canadian, was diagnosed with malignant bone cancer in his right leg in 1977, which led to a leg amputation six inches above the knee, the statement said.

While in hospital, Terry decided to run across Canada to raise funds for cancer research, and his 1980 journey was called the Marathon of Hope.

Terry died in June 1981, but had raised $24.17 million for cancer research.

To date citizens in over 43 countries organise a run in Terry Fox's name and over $180.5 million has been raised; all funds support innovative cancer research and are distributed by the National Cancer Institute of Canada, the statement concluded.



Her Majesty Queen Noor and HRH Prince Ra'd participate in the Terry Fox Run. The funds raised by the run, organised by the Canadian Embassy and Al Amal Centre, will be donated to Al Amal Centre for cancer research (Petra photo)

According to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, President of the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS) Abdullah Khatib, and renowned Arab artists, including the well-known Syrian artists Dureid Lahham, Rafiq Subaiyi and various Jordanian artists also participated in the run.

Jordanian dignitary addresses United Nations General Assembly

NEW YORK (Petra) — Jordan has expressed concern over increasing threats to the Middle East peace process, resulting from Israeli non-compliance the peace principles and the Kingdom has urged the United Nations General Assembly to impel Israel to halt settlement programmes on Arab land.

Jordanian Ambassador to the United Nations Hassan Abu Nimeh addressed the general assembly special session convened to discuss the Israeli construction of a settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem.

He told the meeting that the settlement does not represent the first Israeli violation of international ordinances and stated that Tel Aviv has disregarded peace accords at a time in which it continues to impose closure on Arab lands, demolish Arab homes, ignore basic Arab human rights and prevent Arabs from freely worshipping in Jerusalem.

Israeli confiscation of Arab lands, construction of Jewish settlements and other practices clearly manifest that country's non-compliance the peace accords, designed to return occupied Arab territories to their legitimate owners, the envoy stated.

He emphasised peace as possible only through a full commitment to the peace process and the implementation of all provisions of the peace accords which guarantee the restoration of Arab lands and the recognition of the Palestinian people's full rights.

Jordan has repeatedly opposed Israeli settlement construction on Arab lands as in the case of Jabal Abu Ghneim, which is part of the West Bank, occupied since 1967. Mr. Abu Nimeh asserted.

The construction of the settlement is likely to undermine the peace process and the principle of exchanging land for peace and conflicts with UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 as well as the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Convention of 1907, he said.

The Israeli settlement programme aims at changing the demographic and geographic character of Arab Jerusalem as well as perpetuating the Israeli occupation of Arab lands in defiance of both UN resolutions and international law, according to Mr. Abu Nimeh.

The Jordanian ambassador called on the United Nations to force Israel to desist from building settlements on Arab lands, remove obstacles in the way of the peace process and appeal to the European Union (EU) and global community to guarantee the continuation of the peace process.

He maintained that Jordan will remain committed to the peace process as it is cognisant of the dangers which the Middle East might face in the absence of a just and durable peace.

OIC representative ends visit to Jordan after consultations with Crown Prince, prime minister

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Secretary General Izzedin Iraqi Friday ended a short visit to Jordan as part of a regional tour meant to solicit aid for the cash-strapped organisation and continue its endeavour to save the Arabic and Islamic identity of Jerusalem, informed sources said.

Dr. Iraqi met with HRH Crown Prince Hassan and the two reviewed recent efforts to revive peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

During the meeting, Prince Hassan emphasised the need to support the OIC especially at this sensitive period when, he said, the formation of some regional blocs are effectively working to damage the reputation of Islam.

Mr. Iraqi, former prime minister of Morocco, also briefed the Crown Prince on difficulties faced by the Jeddah-based OIC due to a $15 million debt, which he said, stems from unfulfilled financial commitments of some members.

Mr. Iraqi, who also visited the Gaza Strip, Egypt and Syria, held talks with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh on ways to break through the deadlock in the peace talks following the Israeli government decision to build a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

The OIC Secretary General told reporters, following a 40-minute meeting with Dr. Majali, that the organisation has launched a major effort to "inform the world community of Israeli steps to change the heritage and shape of Jerusalem and its continuous suppression of the Palestinian people."

He added that he briefed Dr. Majali on the measures to revive the role of the OIC as well as the financial status of the 19-year old organisation.

'Magnetic card will not be used in next elections'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordanians will not be required to obtain a magnetic card for voting in the next general elections, Minister of Interior Nathir Rashid was quoted as saying to the local press.

In a report published Friday in the Arabic daily Al Dustour, the minister stated that the magnetic identity cards, to be issued by the Civil Status and Passports Department, will not be required amongst Jordanians during the elections as had been earlier announced.

However, he stated that the magnetic cards could be used after the 1997 elections.

According to the minister, the decision was taken due to the projected lengthy process of issuing such cards.

This could upset the election process, he stated, which the government is keen to see accomplished smoothly.

Voting in the upcoming elections will follow the same pattern adopted in the 1993 parliamentary elections, Mr. Rashid confirmed.

The Ministry of Interior has finalised lists of eligible voters, he added.

This announcement reversed Mr. Rashid's earlier statement last month at which time he was quoted as saying that special voting cards, to be used for 10 years, are to be distributed to voters at the cost of one dinar each.

At the time, the decision drew strong reactions from opposition parties and local columnists who criticised the measure, alleging that the voting cards' fee of one dinar would deprive many people of their right to vote.

Opposition groups also demanded that the voting age be lowered from 19 to 18 years but the government rejected this request and reasserted that the one-person, one-vote election system would be retained as the basis for the temporary elections law.

The government is expected to endorse the system in advance of the elections date.

Al Dustour quoted Mr. Rashid Friday as affirming that the temporary law will amend the existing law in assigning two seats for the Aqaba governorate, and three seats for the Maan governorate.

There will be no further changes in the number of seats in other districts which were upgraded to governorates, he added.

The Council of Ministers is expected to approve or reject these amendments in the coming week, according to the minister.

Apart from these slight changes, there will not be no other amendments to the present election law which will remain in force until the next Parliament suggests otherwise, according to the minister.

He reiterated that the government will undertake necessary measures to ensure that the elections are free and fair.

PNA requests permission to transport passengers to Jordan on national airline

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has submitted a request to Jordan to allow Palestine Airways (PA) to initiate fights to transport Palestinian passengers from Egypt's Areesh Airport in the Sinai to Amman, Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Omar Khateeb said Friday.

Mr. Khateeb described the request, officially submitted Thursday, as a "temporary step" until Israel approves launching flights from Dahaniyeh Airport in the Gaza Strip.

The PNA has completed construction of the Gaza airport, but Israel and the Palestinians are deadlocked in their negotiations over its opening.

The PNA rejected an Israeli demand to control airport security and insisted that security should be the sole responsibility of the Palestinians.

Last year, Palestine Airways launched its first commercial fights from Areesh to Jeddah. The flights were carrying Palestinian pilgrims en route to Mecca and Medina.

Earlier this month, two Palestinian planes made their first landing at Amman's Marka Airport with 80 West Bank students en route to aviation training courses in Casablanca.

Mr. Khateeb told the Jordan Times that Palestinian Airlines has received authorisation to operate commercial flights to Cyprus, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Greece and other states in the region.

The ambassador added that the Jordan-PNA civil aviation accord permit launching flights from Gaza airport to Amman, "however, due to differences with the Israelis on opening Dahaniya Airport, we decided to operate our flights to Jordan from Areesh."

He said that the fights will be operated mainly to transport Palestinians residents in Gaza and PNA delegations travelling abroad.

Mr. Khateeb did not specify as to the number of flights which Palestine Airways plans to operate, but Director General of Jordan's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Captain Jassir Zayyat was quoted as saying that the number of flights will correspond to demand.

Mr. Zayyat added that Jordan "will respond positively to the Palestinian demand as soon as we conclude the necessary arrangements on the operation of these flights."

One killed and four injured in gas cylinder explosion

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — One person was killed and four others, including a 10-year old child, were inured in a gas cylinder explosion early Friday morning in a four-storey building in Jabal Nuzha, Civil Defence Department (CDD) officials said.

The accident, which occurred at 5:45 a.m., was attributed to gas leaks in the first floor, cracking the walls of the four-storey building apartment. Residents were evacuated by CDD rescue teams.

Several walls on the first floor collapsed as a result.

The explosion also rocked a neighbouring building, shattering windows, the CDD official said.

"A 10-year old child in a nearby building was injured through shards of glass from shattered window panes," the CDD official told the Jordan Times Friday.

He added that preliminary investigations indicated that a gas leak in the kitchen caused the explosion.

An investigative committee has been formed to determine whether it was a deliberate or accidental act.

"It appears that gas, emitted from a cylinder, filled the first storey apartment, was ignited by a spark and caused the explosion," the CDD official said.

An apartment resident, Mohammad Daoud, 40, sleeping on the balcony, was killed when the balcony wall collapsed upon him, the CDD official stated.

The deceased man's wife, Mariam Yahya, 30, suffered from second-degree burns and was listed in fair condition.

It is not clear who or what started the explosion, the CDD official said, adding that an autopsy will be performed on Mr. Daoud to determine the cause of his death.

An official source maintained that the man had a previous criminal record and that "the explosion may have been intentional."

The remaining three people, injured in the incident, were rushed to Al Bashir Hospital and listed in fair condition.

Brothers accused of father's stoning death

Meanwhile, Tafileh police Thursday apprehended two brothers in connection with the death of their 50-year old father in the village of Basira, officials confirmed Friday.

The two brothers, Bilal Mazaydeh, 29, and his brother Khalil, 26, reportedly confessed to authorities to killing their father Ahmad, a father of 10, because of family problems, the official source said.

"Their father, who was apparently destitute, wanted to a marry a second woman, but his children did not approve of the decision and resolved to kill him," the official source said.

According to the official, the two youths confessed Thursday that the previous day they stoned their father and struck him with an iron bar until he was dead.

They then reportedly threw his body in a well in the Janin area near the village.

The man's decomposing body was found late Wednesday night, an estimated 14 hours after his death, the official said.

Three people killed in various accidents

In other accidents during the weekend, three people, including a one-year old child, were killed in various incidents, CDD reports said.

In Jerash, an 18-year-old mentally handicapped youth, identified as Mohammad Rashed, drowned after falling in a pool in the Rimon area, a CDD official said.

In Ma'an, a year-old child was killed when her father Abdul Halim Faraj, 35, lost control of the car he was driving and the vehicle overturned, CDD reports said.

The child, Rania, was instantly killed and the two other passengers and car driver were injured.

In Mafraq, reports said Awad Aqeel, 30, was killed when a car and a bus collided near the Amira village intersection, according to reports.

Three people were also injured in the incident and taken to Mafraq Government Hospital by CDD rescue units.

They were listed in fair condition.

WHAT'S GOING ON

CHOIR

* Performance of religious songs by the Jordanian Baptist Community at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC) at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

*"First Amman International Exhibition of Children's Books" at the International Exhibition Centre, University Road (Tel. 659891/2), until April 28.

*Easter egg hunt at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra (Tel. 699141/2), until April 28.

*Exhibition of frescos of Jordanian mosaics and Fayum portraits by Dorothy Mango at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre/Artisana, Jabal Amman, Second Circle. (Tel. 647858), until May 10.

*Exhibition by the San Francisco-based Palestinian-American architectural photographer Said Hisham Nuseibeh entitled "The Farthest Mosque," at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 8. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

*Paintings by Yassin Al Mohammadani at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 681303), until April 28.

*Paintings by Patricia Chatelain at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 27.



Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi Friday confers with visiting Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Secretary General Izzedin Iraqi on cooperation in holding symposia and conferences on contemporary Islamic issues. Dr. Abbadi briefed Dr. Iraqi during a meeting, held at the Islamic Cultural Centre, on Jordanian efforts to restore Islamic sites in Jerusalem, including Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock (Petra photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Financial groups visit Kingdom

AMMAN (Petra) — Directors of 10 international financial and investment companies, representing the largest investment groups specialised in financial portfolios in newly-established markets, are currently visiting Jordan for cooperation talks in the investment field. The delegation members will meet with the deputy prime minister, the Central Bank of Jordan governor and his deputy, representatives of Arab Potash Company, Jordan Cement Factories Company, Zahra Investment Company, the Housing Bank and Al Asr Investment Group.

PIA to hold training courses today

AMMAN (Petra) — The Public Institute of Administration (PIA) today holds three training courses for government employees. The first programme seeks to orient and inform new employees on such issues as civil servant regulation, duties and rights of staff, ways of dealing with the public and office organisation. The second and third programmes are aimed at educating participants on government administration, organisational structure, supervision, facilitation of procedures, use of computers and management of meetings and time, in addition to programme budgets and performance evaluation and standards.

U.K.'s Major attacks Labour's 'contemptible' pension charges

LONDON (AFP) — Prime Minister John Major, stinging from Labour charges that he wanted to scrap government pensions, Friday called the allegation "absolutely contemptible," as the campaign for May 1 elections heated up.

Mr. Major said he would quit Downing Street and quit politics if his cabinet ever tried to push him into scrapping the state pension scheme, which his party earlier had suggested it would partially privatise.

The subject of tampering with government pensions has touched a raw nerve in the election campaign, in which Labour challenger Tony Blair is heavily favoured to unseat Mr. Major and end 18 years of unbroken Tory rule.

Mr. Blair said of the Tories' pension proposals, "there is no doubt that the purpose is to replace the basic state pension with a private pension."

In another development, British hopes of getting parts of the European Union (EU) beef export ban lifted were hit by disclosure that a government proposal had been rejected by the EU.

A letter to Agriculture Minister Douglas Hogg earlier this month by EU Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler and Food Health Commissioner Emma Bonino said, in effect, that Britain's proposal for a "certified herd scheme" was inadequate.

That offer had been viewed as the government's best hope of a breakthrough in the year-long dispute with Europe aimed at lifting the ban imposed after a "mad cow" disease scare.

Labour's shadow agriculture spokesman Gavin Strang said the fact that the ban remained in place, despite Mr. Major's promises in June that it would be lifted by last November, was "appalling."

Also Friday, Mr. Major attacked Mr. Blair in the Labour leader's own back yard. He charged the local Labour-controlled council in North London's middle class yuppie enclave of Islington had a deplorable record on tax and spending.

Alluding to an old scandal over known pedophiles employed in Islington's child care programme, the premier charged the Labour council was crippled by obsession with "political correctness."

"In Islington," said Mr. Major, "Labour is in power and the character of the party is clear: Higher spending, higher taxes, poorer services, unabashed political correctness and repeated financial incompetence."

But it was the persistent issue of pensions that dominated the day's campaigning. Mr. Blair vowing his accusation stood, had said Thursday night, "I do not withdraw a single iota of it."

Ministers were enraged after Mr. Blair claimed a fifth term Conservative government would scrap the basic state pension.

Mr. Major called the claim "scurrilous," and added: "It really does bring politics down into the gutter when people bring charges like this that they know in their hearts to be false.

"This wasn't a casual, tossed-off remark," he said. "This was a carefully calculated, carefully prepared, campaign against the Conservative Party to frighten pensioners into believing that their security and the state retirement pension was at risk."

Health Secretary Stephen Dorrell accused Mr. Blair of telling "bare-faced, despicable lies."

Labour sources said the party had no intention of backing down, and would, in fact, be making further charges.

Two blasts hit U.K. motorway

Meanwhile two devices exploded close to the M6 motorway in central England Friday after police closed sections of three of the country's busiest roads following a series of coded warnings.

Police said at least one device had exploded near a stretch of the M6 which they had left open but could not say whether this was the result of a deliberately misleading phone warning or some kind of misunderstanding.

"One blast took place further north than we had been told," West Midlands police spokesman John Williamson told Sky Television.

Mr. Major, speaking at a regular news briefing, said only minor damage had been caused and that as far as he knew there had been no casualties.

The blasts had all the hallmarks of the banned Irish Republican Army, which has mounted several attempts to disrupt Britain's May 1 election campaign by bringing the country's road and railway network to a halt.

Eyewitness Tim Yardley, who was driving on the M6 at the time, said he had heard both blasts and saw one explosion.

"There was no actual damage done. It was a good 50 metres the other side of the embankment on a piece of waste ground. There was a big cloud of white smoke and everyone was a bit worried," he told Sky.

Traffic jams formed quickly after police shut large parts of both the M5 and M6 in central England near the city of Birmingham and also closed two sections of the major north-south M1 motorway in South Yorkshire.

The main new street railway station in Birmingham and an adjoining shopping centre were sealed off, bringing one of the country's main railway hubs to a standstill.

The IRA, which wants British troops out of Northern Ireland, has disrupted rail and road networks several times in the last few weeks as part of a campaign to cause huge disruption in mainland Britain and win maximum publicity at virtually no cost.

London ground to a halt Monday after bomb threats closed five railway stations and three international airports. Two blasts and a series of bomb warnings paralysed rail and road traffic in northern England last Friday.

Earlier this month the Grand National Horse Race — one of Britain's biggest sporting events — was abandoned because of an IRA telephone call to the racecourse minutes before the start. The race was eventually run two days later.



Soldiers of the Zairean Rebel Alliance stand outside the remains of the Kasese refugee camp, 25 kilometres south of Kisangani. A U.N. team found up to 55,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees missing from a camp in the jungle of eastern Zaire, and were blocked by the rebels from a wider search (Reuter photo)

UNHCR to look for 55,000 Zaire refugees

KISANGANI, Zaire (R) — U.N. aid agencies said they would hunt for 55,000 missing Rwandan Hutu refugees in eastern Zaire by plane Friday amid fears that another 30,000 left their camp.

Paul Stromberg, spokesman for the U.N. High commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR), said aid workers had unconfirmed reports from villagers that 30,000 Hutu refugees at Biaro, 45 kilometres south of Kisangani, had fled.

"The (rebel) alliance has approved a flight so we hope today to overfly Kisangani-Ubundu and maybe land at kilometre 95, the closest airstrip to the presumed location of the refugees," he said.

"The first priority remains to find the refugees."

U.N. officials escorted by rebels said they were shocked to find Kasese camp, 25 kilometres south of Kisangani, empty of its 55,000 Rwandan refugees Thursday after being sealed off since Monday.

They found not a single refugee dead or alive at the camp.

UNHCR said it was the first time a large group of Hutu refugees disappeared in rebel territory and the rebels was responsible for explaining what had happened.

In another development, Angolan Television said Thursday Angolan troops were preventing more than 12,000 Rwandan and Burundian refugees from entering Angola from southwest Zaire.

"The Interior Ministry reported yesterday that more than 12,000 refugees are trying to force their entry into Angola, but our authorities are trying to prevent this at all costs," it said.

Mr. Stromberg said Friday: "In the short-term Kasese is now not of much importance to us because it is a visibly empty site but we still want to know from the alliance what happened there.

"As well as the refugees, there is a lot of gear missing including 10 cubic metre water bladders which take a dozen men to lift even when they are empty. All that was probably looted and not taken with the refugees."

Tutsi-dominated rebels have seized more than half of Zaire since October. The Rwandan Hutu refugees fled Rwanda in 1994 and are collectively accused by minority Tutsis of genocide in Rwanda in the same year.

Up to 9,000 of the Kasese refugees were medically unfit to walk when aid workers last visited at the weekend, including 2,500 severely malnourished children, UNHCR figures showed.

A Zairean farmer from nearby Kasese village told reporters Thursday watched by rebel guards that refugees killed six villagers Monday so Tuesday "we went to discuss with the refugees."

"They started attacking us," said Merindo Masoudi. Asked where they were, he said: "They fled because they did wrong... there may have been some refugees killed but it was those who did wrong."

Overall there was very little debris compared with other camps abandoned by the refugees in their six-month exodus.

The U.N. Security Council Thursday harshly criticised the rebels for preventing aid from reaching the refugees south of Kisangani and obstructing their return home to Rwanda.

The council called "in the strongest terms" on the rebels "to ensure unrestricted and safe access by all humanitarian relief agencies" and said it was alarmed by reports of massacres in east Zaire.

The rebels sealed off the Kasese and Biaro camps from aid workers and journalists Monday, saying they were conducting a military operation.

Rebels agreed to allow the U.N. mission to Kasese only after U.N. Chief Kofi Annan said he was appalled by the "inhumanity" of their action which was killing the refugees by starvation.

Zairean villagers said Wednesday the Tutsi-dominated rebels had killed hundreds of Rwandan Hutu refugees at Kasese.

"The Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire... does not have a policy which consists in making life more difficult for the refugees," said Raphael N'Genda, "information minister" in rebel-held Lubumbashi Thursday.

Meanwhile, Zairean authorities are strengthening the capital's last major line of defence against rebels advancing from the east, the town of Kikwit, 400 kilometres from here, press reports said Friday.

The pro-government Soft newspaper said that Kikwit had become a focal point as the military tried to stem the rebel onslaught.

"Kikwit will be the key that allows government forces to counter the rebel advance," it wrote, saying local people were beginning to flee into the forests to escape the fighting.

The town is the economic capital of Bandundu province, and lies on the main axis of the rebel advance from Lubumbashi and Kananga.

Another axis is heading toward Kinshasa from northern Bandundu, while a third front is threatened at Matadi, southwest of here.

Since the eastern provinces were captured when the rebels began their offensive about six months ago, Bandundu province has become the main source of food for Kinshasa.

Its fall would be disastrous for the capital, especially if the port of Matadi was also to be attacked, cutting off imports.

The pro-opposition Phare newspaper said thousands of government troops had arrived in Bandundu province after fleeing fighting in the east.

"Kinshasa is being encircled," the pro-opposition Forum daily said. "By doing this, (rebel leader Laurent) Kabila is trying to isolate the capital to make it an easy target."

The rebels have captured more than one half of this vast nation since October, and have vowed to be in Kinshasa in June.

Earlier this week, the rebel alliance announced the capture of three more towns, amid fading hopes of organising a face-to-face encounter between Mr. Kabila and President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Bomb case prosecutor says McVeigh hated government

DENVER (R) — The prosecution accused Oklahoma City bombing defendant Timothy McVeigh of being a right-wing extremist who thought the deadly blast would trigger a second American revolution.

But Mr. McVeigh's attorney, Stephen Jones, sought to counter the government's claim by saying he would prove it had accused the wrong man of blowing up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building and killing 168 people on April 19, 1995.

In an opening statement laying out the case against the Gulf War veteran, prosecutor Joseph Hartzler declared: "McVeigh liked to consider himself a patriot, someone who could start the second American revolution.

"Our forefathers did not fight innocent women and children," he said. "They didn't plant bombs and run away wearing earplugs."

Mr. McVeigh, who has pleaded innocent and who could face the death penalty if convicted, took copious notes during the opening statements, occasionally looking grim-faced and tense.

Mr. Hartzler said the prosecution would offer evidence that Mr. McVeigh created a file in his sister Jennifer's computer that talked about Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms agents.

"It said all you tyrannical motherf———s will swing in the wind one day for your treasonous actions against the constitution and the United States... Die you spineless, cowardice bastards," Mr. Hartzler said, reading from the computer entry.

Mr. Hartzler also said surveillance tapes existed showing Mr. McVeigh's co-defendant Terry Nichols' truck in Oklahoma City on the Sunday before the bombing. The following day Mr. McVeigh was captured by a security camera at a McDonald's restaurant in Junction City, hours before he allegedly rented the Ryder truck.

Mr. Jones said a witness who saw a man get out of the rented Ryder truck used in the bombing described him as short, stocky and of olive complexion. Mr. McVeigh is tall and fair-skinned.

Mr. Jones called into question the eyewitness descriptions offered by employees at Elliott's Body Shop in Junction City, Kansas, where Mr. McVeigh allegedly rented the truck. Mr. Jones said they may have confused two other men who rented a similar truck the following day.

Mr. Jones also claimed the evidence collected by authorities was handled improperly. "They contaminated it, mishandled it, abused it, manipulated it and engaged in forensic prostitution."

The government is expected to introduce evidence about bomb residue on Mr. McVeigh's clothing. But Mr. Jones countered: "If Tim McVeigh had set that bomb, his fingernails, his nostrils, his hair, his clothing, his car, his shoes, and his socks would have it all over them and they don't.

"Every pancake has two sides," he said at the end of a two hour and 40 minute address to the jurors.

Mr. Hartzler portrayed Mr. McVeigh as a twisted patriot out to avenge the 1993 FBI assault on the Branch Davidian religious cult in Waco, Texas, which ended in the deaths of 80 people.

He said that prosecutors would present telephone records that trace Mr. McVeigh's activities from the time he allegedly sought to buy bomb-making materials in the fall of 1994 until the bombing.

But Mr. Jones told the jurors the phone cards could be used by anyone who knew the password of the account. "The card didn't carry a camera with it," Mr. Jones said.

After sending jurors home early for the day because of snowy weather, Federal Judge Richard Matsch ruled that some prosecution photographs will be admitted as evidence over defence objections, including a photograph of the day-care centre and another "even though it shows blood and trauma."

Suspect questioned in Belgian serial killer case

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Belgian police have detained a suspect in their enquiry into a serial killer who has left a trail of his victims' body parts in the area around Mons, southern Belgium, judicial sources confirmed Friday.

The arrest was revealed by the Belgian press Thursday, but police had refused to confirm the information. The suspect's identity has not been revealed.

"A suspect has been arrested in the Mons case, and he will go before a Committal Court Monday," judicial sources said. The court will decide whether there are grounds to extend the detention.

Police were rumoured to be closing in on the killer — who has taunted them for the past month by leaving a string of female body parts in bizarrely named locations — after the identity of a second victim was established. The severed head of 21-year-old Nathalie Godart of Mons was found on April 12, and identified after police circulated a photo-fit picture.

De Standaard reported Wednesday that a house in the town had been searched, and a suspect and several witnesses questioned.

Prosecutor Didier Van Reusel confirmed Wednesday that the identification of the head had allowed the enquiry "to step up a gear."

Fifteen garbage bags have been found in the Mons area since March 22. All contained neatly severed female body parts, except for one stuffed with clothing.

The parts are from at least three victims, though they may come from up to six different people.

Only one had previously been identified thanks to a Tattoo. She is believed to be Martine Bohn, a 43-year-old French prostitute living locally, whose torso was fished out of a river in July last year.

Armenia marks anniversary of 1915 genocide

YEREVAN (R) — Tens of thousands of Armenians Thursday commemorated the Ottoman Turkish massacre of large numbers of their compatriots 82 years ago.

The mourners, dressed in black, marched to Tsitsernagapert Hill, just outside the capital Yerevan, where a flower-shaped monument stands to the victims of what Armenia has always described as genocide.

Christian Armenia says 1.5 million Armenians were massacred by Turks in 1915. Turkey says the figure has been grossly exaggerated.

President Levon Ter-Petrosyan and patriarch of all Armenians Karekin I were among those who laid flowers.

Former Prime Minister Vazgen Manukyan, who claims that Mr. Ter-Petrosyan falsified last September's presidential election results to keep power, told his supporters in Yerevan's Liberty Square that April 24 united all Armenians, regardless of their political sympathies.

Meanwhile, Europe's top security forum said Thursday it would suspend its monitoring activities in the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region on the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia because of danger to its staff.

The Vienna-based Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said in a statement recent shooting incidents had jeopardised the safety of its personnel in the region.

"After shooting incidents in April and November 1996, the (OSCE) personal representative decided that future monitoring would be carried out only after notification to and consent from the respective parties," the OSCE said.

A fragile ceasefire has been in place since 1994 in the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, subject of a nine-year dispute between the majority ethnic Armenian population, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

U.S. Senate approves chemical weapons treaty

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. Senate Thursday approved a world treaty outlawing chemical weapons, handing President Bill Clinton a major foreign policy victory.

The vote of 74-26, seven more than the two-thirds majority needed for treaty approval, cleared the way for the United States to ratify the pact, called the Chemical Weapons Convention, before it goes into effect next Tuesday.

Mr. Clinton, who had invested much political and personal capital in a high-profile lobbying campaign to win approval of the treaty, applauded the vote and expressed his "profound gratitude" to the Senate for "serving America well."

"Our troops will be less likely to face poison gas on the battlefield, our hand will be strengthened in the fight against terrorists and rogue states, we will end a century that began with the horror of chemical weapons in World War I much closer to the elimination of those kinds of weapons," Mr. Clinton told reporters at the White House.

The final vote, in which 29 Republicans joined all 45 Democrats to back the treaty, came after the Senate had stripped out four conditions to the ratification resolution that would have set insuperable barriers to U.S. participation in the treaty.

Only the Senate is required to give consent to treaty ratification. However, both the House of Representatives and Senate will now be asked to pass implementing legislation.

A key factor in the treaty's approval was a decision by Republican leader Trent Lott to break with his fellow conservatives and support the treaty.

Mr. Lott told reporters after announcing his decision: "I think I did the right thing. I'm going to take a lot of flak on it. Now we'll see if the president shows the same courage against his base (on the budget)."

In a Senate speech, Mr. Lott said the United States was "marginally better off" with the treaty than without it.

At stake, he said, was the credibility of the commitments of two presidents — George Bush and Bill Clinton. Failure to ratify would have lasting consequences, he said.

A crucial factor in Mr. Lott's support for the treaty was an 11th-hour letter from Mr. Clinton pledging to withdraw from it if other countries used its provisions to proliferate poison gas technology and endanger U.S. security.

Mr. Lott said the letter responded to concerns that articles in the treaty could have the effect of causing proliferation of poison gas rather than its elimination.

The 1993 treaty aims to ban the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons worldwide.

U.S. Jewish headquarters comes under security threat

WASHINGTON (R) — A mailed package containing suspicious "biological material" sparked a major security alert at the headquarters of the Jewish organisation B'nai B'rith, bringing police, firemen, the FBI and military disposal squads to the scene.

No serious injuries were initially reported but at least two B'nai B'rith employees were reported to have suffered respiratory problems. One person was seen being sprayed with a decontaminant by a white-clad rescue team.

The building in bustling downtown Washington D.C. about six blocks from the White House was evacuated and streets blocked, sowing chaos in the capital. U.S. military disposal experts gingerly removed the suspicious package in a cannister for examination at a nearby Naval medical laboratory.

"We found some biological material and a note that was left with the package," District of Columbia Police Chief Larry Soulsby said in a televised interview.

"An 8x10 (inch) envelope was found in our mailroom with red liquid coming out of it" late Thursday morning, B'nai B'rith Spokeswoman Robin Schwartz-Kreger told Reuters by telephone.

She said it was accompanied by a "threatening" letter but she did not know the nature of the threats.



U.S pilot Linda Finch, holding a bouquet of flowers, poses for pictures next to her 1953 Lockheed Electra 10E aeroplane on her arrival in the Gulf Emirate of Dubai. She was on a scheduled stop in her flight around the world to recreate Amelia Earhearts attempt 60 years ago (Reuter photo)

Earhart protege stops in Dubai during round the world trip

DUBAI (R) — U.S. pilot Linda Finch has arrived in the Gulf Emirate of Dubai for a scheduled stop in her flight around the world to recreate Amelia Earhart's attempt 60 years ago.

Ms. Finch reached Dubai at 9:30 p.m. from the Egyptian resort of Luxor where she ended the African leg of her 48,000-kilometre journey in a 1953 Lockheed Electra 10-E. She planned to leave for Karachi Friday.

Dubai's executive flights services said the airport exempted Ms. Finch and her crew from all airport charges including landing, parking and handling fees.

"I think clearly this flight should be a tribute to Amelia," Ms. Finch, 46, told reporters during her stopover in Luxor.

"What she did was so much harder, the things she had to conquer not having... navigation equipment and no one following to know. She spent her whole life working to inspire others and I want people to know that."

Earhart, who in 1932 became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic, had completed 35,000 kilometres of her attempt to circle the globe in a Lockheed Electra 10-E when she disappeared between New Guinea and Howland Island.

Ms. Finch, a Texas businesswoman with gurgling enthusiasm and over 20 years flying experience, said she became entranced by Earhart's life while looking for aeronautical challenges.

She set off from California in March to retrace a route similar to the one Earhart took in 1937 and hopes to complete the flight in May.

Memories of Earhart helped her to brave thunderstorms on her 13-hour flight over the Atlantic and expects her flight from Honolulu to Oakland over the Pacific will take another rough 15 to 17 hours. But she says solid faith, sturdy equipment and talismans will protect her.

Proudly displaying a silver cross from her Presbyterian Church and a locket stuffed with family pictures given to her by her daughter, she said she had no fear she would be unable to deliver what she described as Earhart's message.

"Amelia didn't like limits, the limits that society set on women in the 1930s... I believe the extraordinary thing that Amelia did was to show others that they could do it too," she said.

Engine makers Pratt and Whitney paid $4.5 million to restore Mr. Finch's 1935 Electra, set up an education programme and finance the two-and-half month "World Flight 1997" to 20 countries in five continents.

Woman gives birth at 63 in a victory for women

LOS ANGELES (R) — Doctors who treated the oldest woman ever to give birth brushed aside the fact she lied about her age, saying Thursday the 63-year-old first-time mother's achievement was a blow for sexual equality.

"I would argue that this has been going on for a long time with men this just levels the playing field for women," said Dr Richard Paulson, professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at the University of Southern California (USC).

"Human beings have been becoming parents in their 50's and 60's for a long time," Dr. Paulson told reporters, but it was only men.

The professor also heads USC's programme for Assisted Reproduction, which announced Wednesday that a woman had given birth at the age of 63 years and nine months as a result of in-vitro fertilisation.

Dr. Paulson said the woman, who asked to remain anonymous, was the oldest on record to give birth. A woman in Italy had a baby last year at the age of 62.

"It might be said that women have not one, but two biological clocks. The clock with the eggs and ovaries seems to run out much earlier than the one for the uterus and the remainder of the reproductive system," he said.

The university said in a statement that the woman, who had been trying to get pregnant since she married 16 years earlier, had a baby girl by caesarean section, at an undisclosed hospital in December and that she and her daughter are in good health. She was breast-feeding, Dr. Paulson said.

Through the in-vitro method, a donated egg was fertilised with sperm from the woman's husband and the embryo implanted in her. The first attempt was unsuccessful, but the second fertilised egg was accepted by the woman's body and developed naturally, Dr. Paulson said.

"The first time we saw the heart-beat in the baby, she (the mother) held my hand and tears came in my eyes," said Dr. Melvin Thornton, who treated the woman.

USC doctors said the woman lied about her age in order to enter the infertility programme which has a maximum age limit of 55. She apparently produced documents from another hospital giving her age at the time she started the treatment as 50, when in fact she was 60.

"Our consciousness has been raised to the issue of people deceiving us about their age," said Dr. Paulson, who stressed the woman passed a rigorous cardiovascular physical examination.

However, officials said that in future they would carry out more stringent background checks on patients, although there were no plans to change the 55-year age limit.

Dr. Paulson compared giving birth at an advanced age to such things as climbing Mt. Everest. "I'd say, gosh, good for them," he said.

Russia, China embrace under shadow of growing U.S. power

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yelsin and his visiting Chinese counterpart Jiang Zemin tightened their embrace this week with a key troop reduction treaty and joint call for a new world order.

Despite a lukewarm reaction from the West, analysts here said Friday that the blooming ties from the one-time enemies were more than a marriage of convenience based on pressure from the United States.

"These ties between Russia and China are very, very serious and illustrate the long-term convergence of their strategic aims," said Pavel Felgenhauer, defence analyst at Moscow's Sevodnya daily.

"China does not want to concentrate its forces on its former Soviet border. Russia needs China to guarantee stability in Central Asia. What is more, China wants to buy Russian arms and Russia wants to sell them," he added.

In Washington, officials shrugged off the rapprochement as a symbolic partnership which would quickly disintegrate as the two countries find themselves at cross purposes as they compete for Western recognition of their big power status.

But Vladimir Avertcheev, member of the Russian parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, said this attitude was clearly based on the assumption that the United States was the world's leader.

"These opinions come from people who are not pleased by warming ties between Russia and China. It is true that the United States plays an important role in the world, but that does not mean that our relations with China are only built with reference to the United States," he said.

"I don't see any conflicting interest in the relationship between China and Russia," he added.

While Russia and China both have a host of internal problems — ranging from Moscow's bete noire, Chechenya, to Beijing's military muscle-flexing off the coast of nationalist Taiwan — they are both united in their desire for a peaceful Central Asia, if only to concentrate their efforts in other areas.

Russian weapons sales also benefit both sides as China remains under a Western ban on military purchases following the 1989 Tiananmen massacre and Moscow needs the sales to bolster its faltering economy.

The leaders of the two giant nations issued a political statement that called for a new world order and made thinly-veiled criticisms against the United States and the eastward expansion of NATO towards Russia's borders.

Beijing and Moscow first embarked on a grand alliance in the '50s when the Soviet Union sent thousands of experts to China to build up the war-torn nation's industrial base.

But within a decade, the partnership had collapsed into the frosty Sino-Soviet split that lasted until 1989 and led to a number of border skirmishes.

Both Moscow and Beijing insist the partnership this time round is entirely different, although they concede that U.S. pressure has facilitated the rapprochement.

Beijing reeled in shock last year when Washington dispatched two aircraft carriers to the Taiwan Strait during a series of Chinese military exercises aimed at intimidating the island nation.

In Eastern Europe, planned expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to include former Soviet satellites has drawn strong opposition from Moscow.

"In regard to regional security cooperation, China pays special attention to the military strength of the United States and Russia," wrote the deputy director of the Centre for China's Foreign Policy Studies.

Peru honours dead as Japan hails 'near-perfect' raid

LIMA (R) — Peru paid tribute to the slain heroes of its hostage crisis and Japan thanked the South American country for the military strike that rescued 71 captive VIPs from its embassy residence.

"I would like to offer deep gratitude for the successful resolution of the crisis under your leadership," Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda told Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, according to a Japanese government spokesman.

"The crisis could never have been resolved unless you had the meticulous operation that was near-perfect and miraculous," Mr. Ikeda told Mr. Fujimori after the funerals and ceremonies to honour the one hostage and two commandos who died in Tuesday's battle. All 14 Marxist guerrillas were killed in the assault.

When the armed rebels occupied the ambassador's residence in December, Mr. Ikeda had travelled to Peru to restrain Mr. Fujimori from launching a military assault on the diplomatic compound.

But the Peruvian leader explained Thursday: "I had no option but to carry out the operation because negotiations were deadlocked. And I regret the deaths of some people."

He added: "I didn't tell the Japanese government about the operation in advance because it was important to launch a timely and quick attack on the terrorists and I want you to understand this."

Peru's euphoria at the explosive finale to the agonising four-month hostage siege gave way to grief Thursday.

Mr. Fujimori joined hundreds of soldiers on a hillside cemetery for the burial of army lt. Raul Jimenez and Lt. Col. Juan Valer in side-by-side graves. The men's families and friends wept as military colleagues read tributes and Mr. Fujimori's son Kenji, for whom Valer was a bodyguard, kissed his grave.

"He is a hero to the fatherland, a pride for his wife, an example for youth," Mr. Fujimori said as his 16-year-old son cried at his side.

Seven bullets killed Valer as he was leading Peruvian Foreign Minister Francisco Tudela, the rebels' prize captive, to safety across the roof of the Japanese ambassador's house.

In downtown Lima, the coffin holding Supreme Court Judge Carlos Giusti was carried to Peru's Palace of Justice where families, friends and colleagues filed past and left flowers.

Giusti died to death after being hit by a bullet in the leg — possibly fired by the military — in Tuesday's spectacular storming of the residence where the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) guerrillas had held 72 hostages for 126 days.

The bodies of the 14 rebels, including MRTA leader Nestor Cerpa — all felled by bombs and gunfire in a 40-minute battle — were taken to a Lima Morgue to be collected by their families. But mothers of the guerrillas complained that the morgue was dragging its feet in handing the bodies over.

In Congress, legislators rose to their feet, sang the national anthem and shouted "long live Peru" as five colleagues among the released hostages returned to their seats. "I want to welcome them and salute the integrity shown in four months of captivity," Congress President Victor Joy Way said.

Mr. Ikeda met some of the two dozen Japanese diplomats and businessmen released Tuesday, and was also due to talk with Japanese Ambassador Morihisa Aoki, host of the ill-fated Dec. 17 cocktail party stormed by the MRTA.

Mr. Fujimori decided to launch an assault Tuesday when the rebels were playing indoor soccer. With the hostages warned via an electronic device, commandos swarmed into the building from all sides and through five tunnels.

MRTA leader Nestor Cerpa shouted: "We've screwed up we've screwed up" before he was killed on the mansion's staircase, the daily La Republica reported Thursday. The paper said the two teenage girls among the guerrilla band shouted at troops to hold fire saying "we surrender we surrender."

But the order was shoot to kill. And, according to former hostages quoted in some news reports, Peruvian commandos executed one rebel and killed others who gave themselves up.

The successful operation reversed Mr. Fujimori's popularity rating overnight, according to the polling agency Apoyo SA. A survey conducted the day after the raid showed his approval level shot up to 6" per cent from 38 per cent four days ago, the lowest level during his seven years in office.

The raid also gave Peru's military one of the biggest victories ever in its 17-year war with leftist rebels, in which about 30,000 people have died.

Girls ask U.N. chief what he does for a living

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Saying he had "never seen this place jumping as it is this morning," Secretary-General Kofi Annan welcomed 600 girls, telling them to make themselves at home and "have a ball."

The daughters of U.N. employees, diplomats and journalists, from 9 to 15 years of age, flocked to the United Nations for "take our daughters to work day," undergoing tours, lectures, press conferences and chats with women officials based at the world body.

Mr. Annan welcomed them, answering questions such as: "How can I become secretary-general?" — "What is it you really do?" — "Are you nervous giving speeches?"

"When you become secretary-general ... Good luck," he told one questioner and then verbally took the group through a day of meetings, explaining how the rebels would not allow food aid to reach refugees in Zaire.

But he had a prepared message also, saying millions of girls and women around the world had no power and no vote and made up the majority of the world's impoverished.

"Let us be their special voice today," he said. "I encourage you always to keep your minds and eyes open to new ideas, new interests, because as women of the 21st century there will be no limits to what you can accomplish."

Zorah Tabatabai, who organised the event at the United Nations, said she had resisted pressure to invite boys also.

"The parents of daughters and sons, they know why we are doing this, they know the problem of self-esteem for girls. But some of those with only boys or no children disagree with a daughters' day."

The fifth annual feminist event encouraged workers to bring their daughters to see the world of work.

North Dakota residents stream in behind ebbing flood

GRAND FORKS (R) — Ebbing floodwaters allowed some residents to return to their homes to survey damage as the swollen Red River streamed northward and inundated vast stretches of U.S. and Canadian prairie.

"We had a very quick exodus and now we want a very orderly return" to Grand Forks, National Guard General Murray Sagsveen said. Nearly the entire city of 50,000 was swamped by the Red River a week ago and downtown streets resembled canals.

Troops manning checkpoints provided access to less than one-quarter of the city left dry as the river gradually receded about 30 centimetres from its 16.5 metre crest reached early on Wednesday. The cleanup may take months, particularly since the city could be without fresh water for weeks until its submerged water plant can be decontaminated.

Grand Forks Mayor Pat Owens, whose feisty manner has come to symbolise the stoicism prevalent during the crisis, acknowledged that her town may never be the same. She said some areas of the city close to the river may not be rebuilt and some residents may never come back.

"But we will put our city back together," Ms. Owens said at a daily news briefing. "The people in our community have held up wonderfully... We have some diehards."

Visibly upset, she held up a story from the Fargo, North Dakota, forum newspaper headlined "finger-pointing begins in Grand Forks" and vehemently denied blaming the Natio-nal Weather Service for un-derestimating the river's crest last week when the city might have been able to raise its dikes.

A federal study under way for the past two years has suggested building a "ring" dike around Grand Forks, which sits on a flood plain that extends 120 kilometres south to Fargo and 241 km north to Winnipeg, Manitoba.

In what experts have called a once-in-500-year flood, the usually tame Red River swelled to 22 times its normal flow as record-breaking winter snows mel-ted. Rivers across North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota spilled out over the countryside and inundated thousand of homes this month.

The federal reserve, the U.S. Central Bank, urged banks in the three flood-ravaged states to go easy on financially stressed borrowers whose homes and farms were damaged, and in Washington President Bill Clinton increased the disaster aid he is seeking from Congress for the flood-ravaged states of North Dakota, South Dakota and Min-nesota by $300 million.

White House Spokesman Mike McCurry told repor-ters the money brings to $788 million the amount Mr. Clinton is seeking for the region, which he visited Tuesday to see the damage.

Massive snowdrifts from a miserable winter continued to melt on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border, sending sheets of water over farms and roads. In Canada, where Manitoba issued an emergency evacuation order for 17,500 people in the Red River Valley this week, at least 1,500 soldiers were being deployed to fight the flood. The drownings of two boys and a man this week were blamed on the rising floodwaters.

In Winnipeg, the provincial capital with 630,000 people, where the river may not crest until next week, the mayor declared a state of emergency and ordered sandbagging to bolster a flood control system built 30 years ago.

Clinton, Hashimoto hold informal chat

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton and Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto chatted informally over coffee late Thursday night in a warm start to a two-day visit to Washington by the Japanese leader.

White house spokesman Mike McCurry said Mr. Clinton and Mr. Hashimoto were "teasing each other and bantering around a little bit" in the Oval Office before Mr. Clinton went to the press briefing room to deliver remarks praising the Senate's passage of a chemical weapons treaty.

After Clinton's remarks, which Mr. Hashimoto watched on television in the Oval Office, Mr. Clinton rejoined his guest. They went over to the White House residence for what Mr. McCurry described as "a social visit that would no doubt border on the substantive."

The two leaders were expected to hold official talks Friday.

A key topic that Mr. Hashimoto had on his mind was whether Mr. Clinton would be raising specific trade issues during their talks.

Japan's trade surplus with the United States rose 11.2 per cent to $3.04 billion in March, the sixth consecutive month in which it had risen year-on-year.

"The first thing I want to find out when I arrive in Washington is whether President (Bill) Clinton will bring up specific trade issues," Mr. Hashimoto told reporters travelling with him from Tokyo to Washington.

Dissatisfied with slow growth in sales of American goods and services in Japan, Washington has been calling for progress in bilateral negotiations over such issues as automobiles, airline service, shipyards and telecommunications.

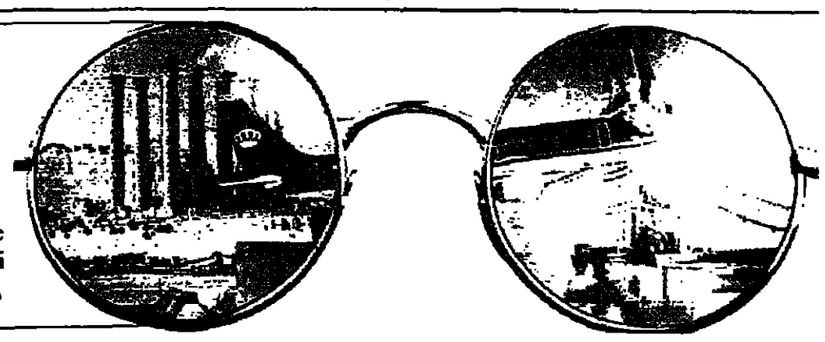
Japan wants the summit to be a venue for an exchange of opinions on world affairs such as the situation in the Korean peninsula and aid to poverty-stricken African nations.

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Cause worth supporting

A RECENT study by an independent think-tank on race relations in the United Kingdom, the Runnymede Trust, has found that Britain is becoming a nation of Muslim-haters. The study says that Islamophobia in Britain has become "more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous." Prejudiced and antagonistic comments, mostly subtle, but sometimes blatant and crude, that appear in the media, says the study, partly account for the continuous spread of Islamophobia not just in Britain but in many parts of the Western world.

The Muslim World cannot sit idle as politically-motivated or ignorance-ridden circles make more headway in their drive to distort the image of Islam. Jordan has spearheaded efforts to discredit the smear campaign to which Islam is being subjected. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has adopted dialogue as the best vehicle for showing the true picture of Islam. His many initiatives and efforts in defence of Islam and its image have made a significant impact and produced positive results, the most recent of which was the adoption by the International Parliamentary Union of a resolution against discrimination against Islam.

But the fight on behalf of Islam and its tolerant message should be a pan-Muslim one to which all Muslim countries must contribute. Joint action is as much a necessity in this area as it is in other political and economic spheres. These are the times of regional blocs and groupings.

The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), a joint action organisation whose mandate is a unifying one, is worthy of the support of all member states. The organisation can play a major role in defending Islam and serving the interests of all Muslims. But the organisation is in the midst of a financial crisis that is rendering it unable to perform its duties.

The OIC is facing an accumulated deficit of $15 million and is operating on 40 per cent of its $10 million annual budget because many member states are not paying their dues. This is a situation that must not, cannot, continue. The OIC should not be allowed to go down. The amount it needs to resume its active role is insignificant in light of the services the organisation can render to Muslims and their causes.

Jordan deserves to be commended for fulfilling its obligations to the OIC. Other Muslim countries should do the same. The challenges the Muslim Nation is facing are numerous. The OIC, if helped, can stand up to these challenges.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for **Al Ra'i** said Jordanians have been misled by statements that they will witness prosperity following the conclusion of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty in 1994. The Jordanians heard Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali promise the country prosperity, at the time when the treaty was signed, and President Clinton pledged before Parliament in Amman that the U.S. will flood Jordan with assistance, would change the economic life and bring about prosperity to the Kingdom, noted Fahed Fanek. The writer said nothing has materialised so far, except for the $70 million allocated by the U.S. government to back the peace process. But Dr. Majali has once again contributed to the creation of great expectations in the minds of the Jordanian people as a result of the peace treaty with Israel when he said at a press conference, following his recent visit to the U.S., that the U.S. administration has given pledges at the highest level to meet the Jordanian economic needs, he pointed out. The writer said he wished the prime minister were more careful this time and refrained from giving the Jordanian citizens the impression that the U.S. will come to the help of the Kingdom; if such pledges do actually exist, the people would like to know who gave them, especially as only $10 million in economic aid to Jordan is all that has been allocated in the U.S. fiscal budget for this year.

A WRITER for **Al Dustour** tackled the Social Security Corporation's (SSC) efforts to utilise the accumulated funds at its disposal with the purpose of earning more revenues for the beneficiaries. Mohammad Daoud said that over the past 15 years, the SSC succeeded in investing the funds at its disposal, which are collected from the employees' wages, in projects and made profits from some of the projects. He said that despite the expertise it has acquired from its past investments, the SSC remains unable and lacks the skill to manage investments and therefore it is advisable for the SSC board to confine its operations to offering loans for projects which are guaranteed to yield profits in terms of interest and to refrain from taking active part in managing investments. The writer said that the gains the SSC had made from some projects should not tempt it to take adventures and risk funds in just any project as it has to remember that its funds are only the rightful ownership of the public and a serious trust.

Jordanian Perspective

By Dr. Musa Keilani

Is Iraq's assertion it has no more weapons of mass destruction a cry in the wilderness?

LAST WEEK'S Iraqi letter to the U.N. Special Commission on disarming Iraq (UNSCOM) affirming the total destruction of Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction should be a major turning point in the efforts to lift the international sanctions on that country. Members of the U.N. Security Council should study the letter carefully and verify the authenticity of the Iraqi affirmations on various counts and then move to lift the sweeping embargo that has inflicted untold misery on the people of Iraq. It should only be a matter of weeks before the council meets and endorses the Iraqi assertion based on realities on the ground. If the Iraqi claims are found to be genuinely lacking, then the council should state so and define specifically and in precise terms how many more loops Baghdad has to jump through in the circus that has been going for nearly seven years.

If the Iraqi claims are established are authentic, then the council should vote to lift the sanctions and thus remove a major preoccupation of most people in the Middle East region and clear the way for Iraq to return to its natural fold in the Arab World and on the international political and economic scene. Wounds in inter-Arab relations would be healed and, once again, we Arabs can count on the resourceful Iraq to play a leading role in Arab and regional affairs.

Alas, we could only hope things were as simple and as straight-forward as that. But being simple and straight has not been the name of the game as far as Iraq is concerned ever since the country made the folly of invading Kuwait in August 1990, offering the precise opportunity that the U.S. appeared to have been awaiting or even having laid the groundwork for.

Today, things are continuing to follow the U.S.-charted course. The Iraqi leadership remains a caged lion which risks a strong sharp-ended prod every time it roars but is unable to do anything beyond making sounds while continuing to be a very convenient tool for the U.S. to scare off and convince other Arab countries in the region to spend billions of dollars to "defend" themselves against Iraq.

Simultaneously, the U.S. is also ensuring the survival of the Iraqi regime if only as a weapon that could be used against Iran if and when the Tehran theologians decide to take things a bit too far towards expanding their sphere of influence in the region.

Beyond that and more important, however, is the implicit but undeniable control that the U.S. has gained in the international oil market by virtue of Washington's "strategic" political and military alliances with all major oil-producing Arab countries in the Gulf region.

As such, the status quo in the region suits the U.S. very well, and it could even be said that Washington perhaps is more concerned than most not to allow any development to change the facts on the ground, including a change in the regime in Baghdad.

Seen in this perspective, it becomes very clear why the U.S. is moving the goal post of sanctions and conditions attached to it further and further, whenever Iraq goes anywhere near it.

Against this backdrop, where is there room for hopes to see an end to the crippling embargo that has not only paralysed a major Arab power but also dealt severe blows to the physical and mental health of the nearly 20 million people of Iraq?

Indeed, Iraq was deprived of a major arguing point based on the human misery of its people when it accepted the limited oil sale under Resolution 986 to secure a tiny part of its people's needs of food and medicine. But did Baghdad have a choice after having held out for more than two years before accepting the deal while thousands died because of lack of food and medicine?

Today, everyone knows that the Iraqi lion has been deprived of all of its major teeth and it remains very much caged under round-the-clock surveillance by the most sophisticated spying and satellite devices in the world. So where is the logic in the repeated assertions that it continues to hide some of its teeth?

But we have also learnt that logic is not something that is applicable to U.S. dealings and approach to the Iraq crisis.

So the net picture that emerges from the latest Iraqi move to officially notify the U.N. that it has complied with the disarmament demands of the world body is simply that it would shatter against the solid wall that the U.S. has built against any Iraqi return to the world scene and remain another cry in the international wilderness.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Despite compliance with U.N. rulings, Iraq still victim of sanctions

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

THE LOCAL newspapers last week discussed the continued U.S.-backed sanctions on Iraq, the Middle East peace process in light of Israel's illegal practices and domestic issues.

In a scathing attack on Rolf Ekeus, the so-called head of a U.N. inspection committee responsible for stripping Iraq of its mass destruction weapons, a writer for al Ra'i said that the man is not only bent on depriving Iraq of defence weapons in order to serve the interests of the U.S.-Zionist alliance only, but he is also entrusted by Washington to prevent Iraq from acquiring scientific and technological knowledge for the future.

Samir Qtami said that this Swedish Jew realises that Iraq has no more mass weapons of mass destruction with which to threaten Israel, and he realises too well that the Jewish state possesses a biological and nuclear arsenal capable of destroying the whole Middle East region.

He said that despite its compliance with the U.N. sanctions rules and its close cooperation with the U.N. inspection teams, Iraq is still a victim of the whims of Mr. Ekeus and Washington, both of whom receive their instructions from the Jewish state and not from the U.N. Security Council.

Dwelling on the same topic, a writer for Al Dustour accused Mr. Ekeus of forging facts about the weapons situation in Iraq and manoeuvring in order to cover up on America's insistence on keeping in place the sanctions imposed on Iraq since 1990.

George Haddad said that Mr. Ekeus is intent on supporting the U.S. in its bid to perpetuate the sanctions on Iraq in the face of opposition from Russia, China and France and he seems determined to keep the Iraqi people suffering from the unjust embargo on their country.

By repeatedly alleging that Iraq is obstructing the work of the international weapons inspection teams, Mr. Ekeus is finding a pretext to persuade the U.N. Security Council sanctions committee to retain the embargo on Iraq, noted the writer.

He said that by securing the backing of Russia, France and China, Iraq has succeeded in exposing the barbaric American embargo and Mr. Ekeus, its little tool, who, said the writer, has succeeded in harming the credibility of his home country, Sweden, before the eyes of the Arab World.

Reflecting on Israel's continued practices, a writer for Al Ra'i said that one can only feel satisfied with Jordan's reduction of the level of contacts with Israel in view of the latter's ongoing atrocities in the occupied Arab territories.

Despite the fact that the Arab League has exempted Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinians from boycotting Israel or freezing their contacts with the Jewish state, it has been noticed that the Jordanian government has reduced the level of its contacts with Tel Aviv in view of Israel's expansionist moves, its illegal practices in and other practices reflecting the Jewish state's non-compliance with the requirements of peace, said Mahmoud Rimawi.

The writer said Jordan, which has sought to secure a comprehensive peace in the region and protect the Arab nation's interests, is contributing to exposing the Israeli government's illegal practices and focusing world public attention on the Israeli measures against the Palestinians.

The writer expressed hope that the Jordanian government will now increase its contacts with other Arab countries in pursuit of a concerted pan-Arab stand to deal with the Israeli challenge.

Fakhri Saleh, a writer for Al Dustour, criticised the United States for helping the Israeli oppressor against the oppressed Palestinian people, saying that every time the Israelis seem to be adamant in their position and illegal defiance of the whole world, Washington demands from the Palestinians to make further concessions to the Jewish state.

The writer said that by adopting such a policy, the United States in not only encouraging Israel to pursue its expansionist policies and build more settlements on Arab-owned lands but also escalating tension in the whole Middle East region.

From the way it has been acting, Washington seems to be supporting all actions of the Netanyahu's government in Palestine and against the Arabs and the Palestine National Authority.

He said the U.S. is pursuing this policy despite its knowledge that Mr. Netanyahu is sacrificing the whole Middle East peace process for the sake of building a settlement on Arab east Jerusalem lands.

A writer for Al Ra'i discussed the ordeal which Jordanians face each summer due to the shortage of water supplies and accused the water authority of failing to live up to the water distribution programme it announces at the beginning of every summer.

The columnist, who writes under the pen name Nazih, said that not only does the water authority fail to remain committed to the distribution programme, it also favours certain areas, discriminating between different districts, especially in the Amman area.

Pointing out that the water authority officials keep claiming that they strictly abide by the distribution programme, the writer said that the facts on the ground speak otherwise.

Some districts barely receive a day's supply of water for the whole week, while other districts never experience a one-day shortage, charged the writer.

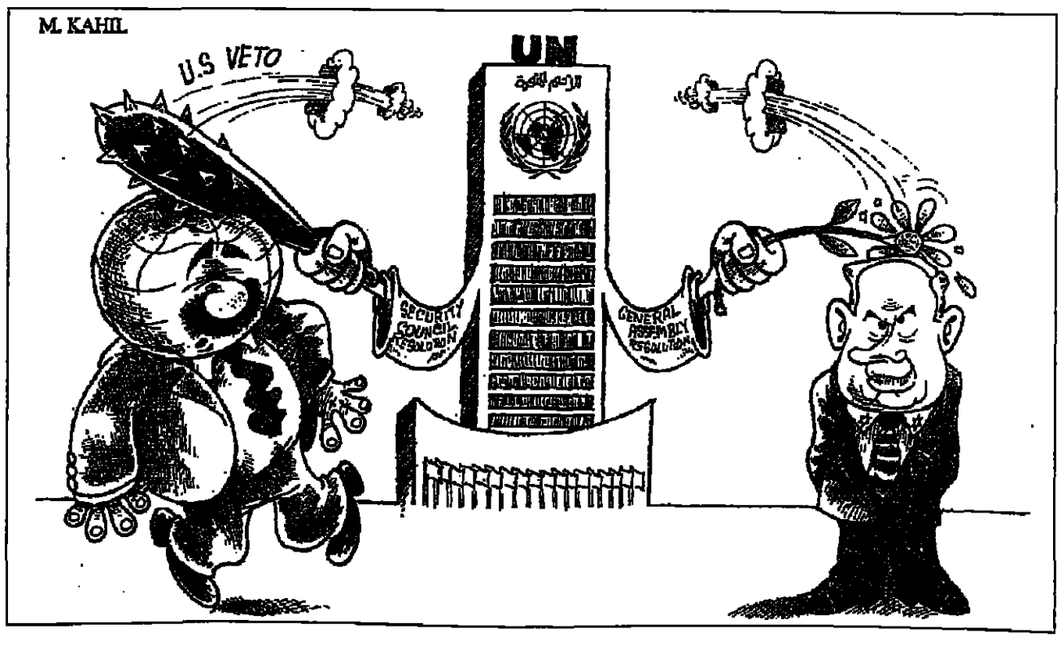
He said that by so doing, the water authority is encouraging the black market sale of water whose proprietors overcharge the thirsty citizens at will.

A writer for Al Dustour discussed the growing number of road accidents in Jordan and said that, as a result, the Kingdom stands to incur very heavy human and material losses.

Abdullah Khatib said that a conference held recently in a developed nation reached the conclusion that the heavier the penalties imposed on violators of traffic rules, the fewer the occurences of accidents; he demanded that a heavy penalty and imprisonment be imposed on violators of traffic rules in Jordan in a bid to deal with this situation.

The writer suggested that a JD 250 fine be imposed on the driver who ignores the red light, plus a prison term, and if the violation is repeated, a JD 500 fine be imposed and the driver's licence be withdrawn.

The writer said that unless the traffic department takes a very drastic action to deal with the situation, the carnage on our the streets will never stop.



LETTERS

Identifying with secular values

Following is an open letter to President Clinton:

I AM offended by your posturing about the abuse of religion by Iraq to justify breach of U.N. decisions and Desert Storm strictures on Iraqi use of air-power in the dispatch of helicopters to transport ailing and elderly pilgrims back from Mecca.

But far more offensive I find these fatuous pronouncements coming, as they do, from an American president who has had the unmitigated gall to use the U.S. veto to block U.N. censure of Israel's gross violations of U.N. resolutions and, to add insult to injury, to appear at public functions in and about Israel wearing the yarmulke, which signifies Jewish religious observance (for example, at the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin).

Growing up in American schools, I was taught about the struggle to achieve a nation in which separation of church and state was the foundation of individual liberties, including the right to practise the religion of one's choice. I expect my country's president to identify with this secular tradition, not to appear in the garb of a Catholic priest, the war-paint of some tribe, and certainly not the headcover of an Israeli Jew. Israel is a criminal colonial settler state, engaged in wresting by force the land of Palestine from its rightful occupants. The Yahweh of their official state religion is that well-known genocidal maniac celebrated in the Jewish Bible which has been swallowed like a corrosive poison in the teachings of the Christian Holy Book and, unfortunately, therefore regarded as a legitimate object of worship by many Americans, especially Christian and Jewish Zionists. It should be said that many Christians, Jews and Muslims in America and elsewhere do not regard genocide as an admirable trait in a divine figure and strongly oppose the dispossession of Palestinians that is being perpetrated under his presumed sponsorship. Never mind that a majority of Israelis are secular, all except a few heroic figures like Israel Shahak benefit from this absurd so-called "religious" justification, living in Arab houses on stolen Arab land.

Since you, Mr. President, seem blissfully unaware of the ludicrous picture which your yarmulke creates for your own countrymen, I must point out that it is grotesque for a person in your position to identify yourself with a pirate state which is using religion to justify murder, torture and theft on a grand scale, while piously proclaiming that Saddam Hussein is wrong when he uses religion as an excuse to violate rules limiting his use of his own planes to bring back pilgrims from Mecca.

I deeply resent the billions of dollars which you contribute annually from American taxpayers money to Israel's immoral purpose. How can you allow millions of Americans to go without medical insurance? How can you leave the inner cities of America in the grip of crime and drugs while the schools deteriorate? We need a GI Bill for educating the disenfranchised in schools and universities instead of more and more prisons. Please, take off your yarmulke and put on your thinking cap.

For a supposed "honest broker" to tell the Palestinians to leave the U.N. out of it and go negotiate with the Israelis is like the marriage counsellor telling the wife who asks for a divorce on grounds she has been repeatedly raped and beaten up by her husband, to "go home, fix your hair, cook him a good dinner, and have a nice chat with the old man."

Dr. A. Clare Brandabur,
Amman.

Nation thirsts as politics muddies water and drains ancient rivers

Robert Fisk

DAMASCUS — On Abdul Aziz Al Musri's desk, there is a Koranic quotation in magnificent Arabic script: "And tell them that the water is to be divided between them..."

The head of the international water bureau in the Syrian ministry of irrigation keeps a host of other theological instructions on file, along with historical water agreements stretching back to 2,360 BC, via the Iraqi kingdom of Hammurabi (1792-1750 BC) and four centuries of Ottoman legislation. On Mr. Musri's wall, a large map appears to show the fruits of this collected wisdom: most of Syria is coloured a dark, verdant green. But another set of files on his desk shows just how misleading maps can be.

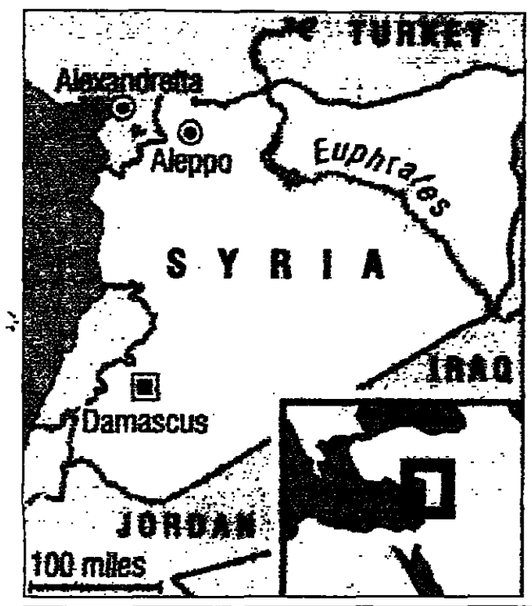
For in the far north of his country — and it is a problem upon which Mr. Musri spends almost every waking hour — the colour green is fading away. Four entire rivers, according to the Syrian ministry, have either dried up because the Turks have diverted the water courses north of the border, or been contaminated by massive pollution from Turkey. Mr. Musri slides a pen down the mournful list on his desk. "The Jaljal river passes through our city of Hassake," he says. "It has dried up. "The El Balih river virtually dried up five years ago when the Turks began using the underground water in the river's catchment area in Turkey. In summer now, the Sajar river runs out of water."

Mr. Musri knows his job. He speaks fluent Turkish and two years ago completed a five-year assignment as first secretary at the Syrian embassy in Ankara. He has visited every Turkish dam on the other side of the frontier and participated in the major water resource conferences with Turkey. His pen comes to rest on another river, the Qweik, which once ran south into the great city of Aleppo. "It is no more," he says.

Not quite. When I visited the area, I found something worse. The Qweik is now a fast-flowing open sewer, its stench drifting for miles across the barren fields. In Aleppo itself, the Syrians have been forced to merge the ancient watercourse, with its underground Roman water tanks and bridges, into the city's sewerage system.



Aleppo, where the Syrians have been forced to merge the ancient watercourse, with its underground Roman water tanks and bridges into the city's sewerage system (above) and map showing the Euphrates (below, left)



"Just 14 months ago, the Turkish side started releasing polluted water in some of our joint rivers," Mr. Musri goes on. "Sewage water and drainage from the lands that carry industrial pollutants came down the Al Balih valley and we are still receiving this dirty water." And from a battered grey filing cabinet in the corner of the room comes another file, crammed with statistics of biological oxygen dissolve (BOD) measurements — a system of checking the purity of water. "In the normal course of events, there should be only 2mg BOD per litre in a river — up to 40 if it is irrigation water. But we've done 300 analyses in the Al Balih valley and they show that BOD reached 500mg per litre. This has polluted the land — it's harmed the health of our farmers and their families, and contaminated drinking water in the region."

Mr. Musri, however, is a technical man. Ask him why the Turks are polluting the rivers and he replies: "It's a political question. From the technical side, we have all the information necessary to reach a joint agreement. The problem today is not so much the amount of water — though that has been a problem on the Euphrates when the Turks were filling their dams — but the quality of the water." All of which depends, it seems, on the quality of political relations between Syria and Turkey, a matter upon which Mr. Musri did not wish to expand.

It is no secret, however, that Turkey's new military agreement with Israel — which allows Israeli pilots to fly in Turkish airspace along Syria's northern border — and Turkey's anger at Syrian support for Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) separatists who are waging a brutal campaign in south-east Turkey, have brought relations between the Syrians and the Turks to their lowest point for many years. The PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, appears from time to time in the Syrian-controlled Lebanese Bekaa valley to issue cease-fire calls or bloodcurdling threats against his Turkish anatgonists. A series of small bombs that exploded in Syrian towns last year were probably the work of Turkish government agents, and reports of sniping by Turkish soldiers across the northern border have been confirmed by a Syrian security source. At one point last year, Syrian armour was moved north after reports of Turkish troop movements. Publicly, the Syrians do not speak about the lost lands around Alexandretta — ceded by the French mandate authority in 1939 in the vain hope of persuading Turkey to join the coming Allied fight against Hitler. But they have not forgotten.

And they are ever mindful of that most ancient of rivers and flows from Turkey, the epic Euphrates whose waters slackened when Turkey built its dams to the north and are now, according to the Syrians, in danger of falling again as the Turks establish two new dams — at Biracik and Karkamish — for land irrigation. Biracik alone, Mr. Musri says, is intended to irrigate 81,670 hectares of land. "This means it will reduce our share of water in the Euphrates. Syria and Iraq are ready to sign a final agreement with Turkey to share the water of the Euphrates in an equitable way according to international law. But the Turkish side, till now, has not reached final agreement because it would like to have time to finish its planned projects."

Mr Musri takes the view that existing legislation between Turkey, Syria and Iraq — especially a 1987 protocol signed by former Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal — form the basis of a final agreement. The irony, of course, is that the sharing of waters between Syria and Iraq has long ago been agreed — even though Saddam Hussein remains a visceral enemy of President Hafez Al Assad of Syria.

The Independent

Private farmers rare in Russian countryside

By Adam Tanner
Reuter

ZHURAVSKY, Russia — Two Russian farming experts with sharply conflicting ideas on how land should be managed went on fact-finding tours to the United States — and both came back inspired.

One was a capitalist, a small farmer who was convinced that if Russia can introduce new technology to the fields, it will be able to compete on world food markets.

The other, unashamedly pro-communist, clings to an unshakeable belief that the old-style Soviet collective farms are the only way forward.

Alexei Storozhenko, a pioneering private farmer in southern Russia's Kuban region by the Black Sea, went to Texas.

"In America, they work five times less than we do because of all the technology," said Mr. Storozhenko, who left a collective in 1991 to set up his own farm. "If Americans worked as hard as we do, they'd be a million years ahead"

Governor Nikolai Kondratenko, however, who opposes a rapid growth in private farming, says his America trip showed him that collective farms forcibly set up in the Soviet Union in the 1930s are the best way to manage agriculture.

"I was in Nebraska and asked to meet a private farmer, but they couldn't find one. They brought me to two brothers who raise bulls, 4,000 of them, and 23 people work with them," he said. "I said 'that's no private farm, that's a kolkhoz'"

Agricultural experts say faith in collective farms, combined with problems such as the difficulty in getting loans, help explain why the number of private farmers nationwide in Russia fell to 279,000 by January 1997, down 1,000 from the year before.

Private farmers, who many foreign experts see as the long-term solution to Russia's farm problems, make up only about three per cent of all agricultural workers.

To chart the progress of private farming since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Reuters has visited Storozhenko, 47, every two years since he established his Zhuravsky farm.

In 1993, he was bitter and frustrated by the difficulties he had endured to leave the kolkhoz. By mid 1995, he was beginning to enjoy the fruits of his labours and saw a $16,000 profit for the year before that, including his son's earnings.

Today, as before, Mr. Storozhenko, whose weathered, thick fingers and soil lodged in his fingernails suggest a lifetime in the fields, works with five partners from his old collective farm, one of whom is his son.

The group still takes turns spending the night in their warehouse, weapons nearby, to deter thieves envious of their ageing Soviet-era tractors and machines, kept running by a winter of creative repairs.

They have leased some additional land of late, giving them more than 500 hectares, but grumble that their land is in two different areas 60 km apart, and that they must pay the government no less than 17 different taxes.

"It's an economically difficult time now," Mr. Storozhenko said. "Prices for foodstuffs have stabilised, but our costs in fertiliser, fuel, parts and other materials have gone up."

Like others in the region, Mr. Storozhenko's output in wheat has fallen steadily over the past two years, and his corn crop failed completely last year. Excluding his son's earnings, he says he made a profit of about $13,600 last year and $5,000 in 1995.

But he has bought a used BMW car, a new Japanese television set, and a few other perks. His decade-old tractors and sunflower oil processor are the envy of would-be private farmers who cannot get loans to break free of their collective farms.

Mr. Storozhenko now hopes to leave a legacy to his grandchildren to continue farming, and points to a 50-year lease on some new land he recently signed.

Ivan Petrenko, the Krasnodar region's deputy governor overseeing agriculture, says about a third of Russia's private farmers are profitable and successful like Mr. Storozhenko. But most got their start in 1991-92, when cheap credits were available.

"Those who set up farms then work well, have technology, produce crops and pay taxes," he said. "But more than half of all private farmers, especially those set up after 1992, are in a difficult situation."

The Akkor Association of Private Farmers blames the regional government for blocking their progress with red tape, and says collective farm officials prevent others starting their own farms. They say inefficiency and ineptitude of collective farms threaten all Russian agriculture unless private farms develop.

Mr. Kondratenko said he saw a role for private farmers, but mostly in specialised roles such as growing flowers and fruit, with collective farms providing the backbone of food production.

He also says mass effort to break up collective farms would be a tragedy on a par with Stalin's collectivisation that led to widespread famine and the deaths of millions.

"I don't have enough fingers to count how many of my relatives died during collectivisation in the 1930s," he said. "But we're about to commit a second crime: the first was forced collectivisation, the second is the destruction of agricultural technology... unified in the collective farm."

Mr. Storozhenko, however, hopes the government will just step back and let private farming develop without interference.

"In principle, we don't need any help from the government," he said. "We just need them to supply social stability, and the market will do the rest."

"That way, among our grandchildren, at least some will remain on the farm."

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IMF defends economic globalisation

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Thursday defended economic globalisation, saying it has sparked growth in poorer nations without depressing wages in developed countries.

"There is no doubt that globalisation is contributing enormously to global prosperity," the IMF argued in its semi-annual World Economic Outlook report, released here ahead of meetings of the fund and the World Bank.

The IMF defined globalisation as the integration of world economies through trade, investment, technology and information exchanges and cross-cultural contacts.

The fund in the report set out to defend globalisation against charges that it leads to lower wages and unemployment among unskilled workers in advanced countries that open their markets to cheap imports.

It maintained that "empirical evidence" suggested that imports have not lowered prices of goods produced in wealthier countries by unskilled labour.

In the United States, according to the IMF, "changes in import prices have been found to have only small effects on wages and employment."

In addition, it said that merchandise imports from developing countries account for between three and five per cent of total output in advanced nations and are therefore simply not significant — "either in terms of quantity or their impact on domestic prices."

"Increased trade with developing countries therefore most likely accounts for only a small part of the increase in wage dispersion and the shift in demand toward high-skilled workers," the report said.

In the developing world, according to the IMF, countries that embrace globalisation by deregulating their markets and rejecting protectionism gain global market share and are "increasingly rewarded with larger private capital flows."

The study found that in sub-Saharan Africa, where tariffs average about 27 per cent, the region's share of world trade fell from about three per cent in the mid-1950s to just over one per cent in 1995.

By contrast, East Asia, where tariffs amount to 15 per cent, is now the world's fastest growing developing country group.

The report added that because of their receptivity to globalisation, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Israel have now moved — in IMF parlance — from the developing country group to the "new advanced economy group."

The World Economic Outlook predicted worldwide output will rise 4.4 per cent this year, underpinned by solid growth in the United States and recovery in Japan and in spite of gloomy European job prospects, but while the overall outlook was favourable, the International Monetary Fund said contrasts in economic performance had become "starker."

It warned that a sharp decline in stock prices could shatter confidence in certain advanced countries and expressed concern that the flow of capital to developing nations remained at the mercy of higher global interest rates.

The IMF predicted that the increase in world output, which was four per cent in 1996, would come to 4.4 per cent in 1997 and 1998.

Among the Group of Seven industrialsed nations, gross domestic product (GDP) would expand 2.9 per cent this year and next, compared with a rate of 2.5 per cent in 1996.

Asian developing nations are projected to show growth of 8.3 per cent in 1997, after 8.2 per cent last year, while growth in Africa will expand to 6.5 per cent in 1997.

In the Middle East, developing economies will grow 3.9 per cent this year, down from 4.5 per cent in 1996.

In Latin America, the growth rate is predicted to increase from 3.5 to 4.4 per cent and will jump from 0.1 per cent to three per cent in the transition economies of central and eastern Europe and central Asia.

The IMF found that the United States operated at near capacity in 1996, posting non-inflationary growth of 2.2 per cent. It predicted that following expansion of three per cent this year growth would slow to 2.2 per cent in 1998.

But the report added that a surge in inflation, projected at three per cent in 1997, and tighter monetary policies "remain a risk to the forecast."

In Japan, a recovery that got under way in 1995 should continue at a modest pace, bolstered by stronger labour earnings and higher net exports.

Growth was likely to dip from 3.6 per cent in 1996 to 2.2 per cent this year, reflecting stock market weakness and lower confidence.

The study stressed that Japanese monetary policy would have "to remain easy until an autonomous recovery is firmly established."

Authorities should also move gingerly in efforts to cut budget deficits in order to preserve momentum, according to the fund.

The IMF report was ominous in its assessment of near-term developments in the European Union (EU), where it said acute, structural unemployment highlighted the uneven nature of the global picture.

"Neither prospective growth nor the progress made with labour market reforms gives reason to expect any significant decline in joblessness in the near future," the report found.

It said unemployment would likely remain "at or near record levels in France, Germany, Italy and several other countries" this year.

EU economic output was forecast to rise 2.4 per cent in 1997, after growth of 1.6 per cent in 1996, with unemployment constant at 11.3 per cent.

The IMF also warned that anemic growth and persistent joblessness threatened to delay the start of EU monetary union in January 1999 and "could lead to turbulence in financial markets."

In Asia apart from Japan, a slowdown in exports has helped contain inflationary pressures and economc overheating, notably in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

After three years of double-digit inflation, China achieved "a soft landing" in 1996, when increases in consumer prices were limited to six per cent and GDP growth came to 9.5 per cent.

"The outlook for 1997 remains favourable," the IMF said, "with growth roughly unchanged and inflation remaining in the single digits."

The report found that Asian economies moving from centrally planned to market-based systems, notably Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, have turned in "solid" performances.

The report also dealt with the situation on world stock markets, where it said recent declines "underscored the risk of a significant correction" that could "undermine confidence in some countries."

While increased investment in developing nations reflected their "successful economic policies," the IMF cautioned that the availability of such capital flows was still vulnerable to changes in interest rates in the developed world.

The semi-annual report also forecast that the

(Continued on page 9)

Luxurious Car For Sale

Oldsmobile - Cutlas, 86 model, navy blue colour, complete, fully automatic options. Previously driven by a lady, the car is in excellent condition.

If interested please call: 819351.

Sunrise Easter Sunday Anglican Service in English

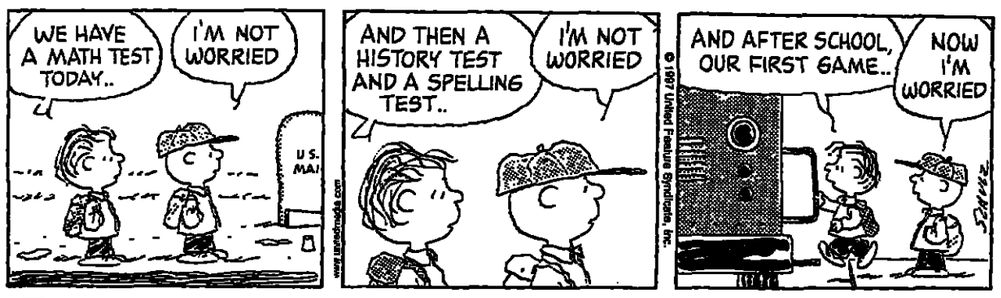
An Anglican Communion Service will be held on Easter morning, April 27th at 6 a.m. at Mount Nebo

All are invited

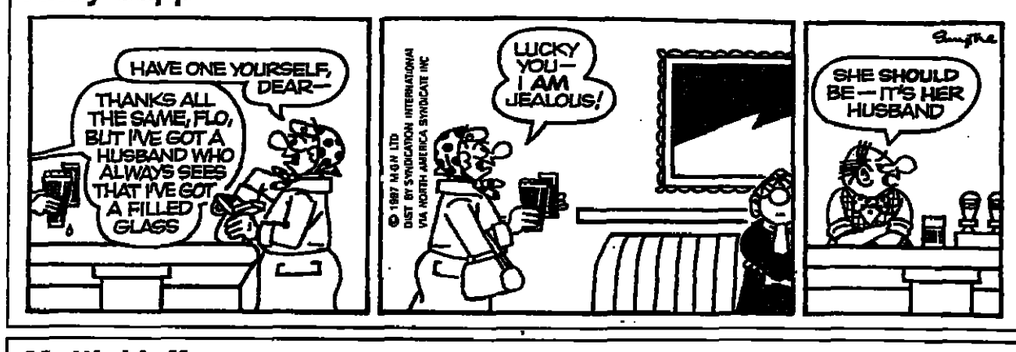
To enquire about transport please call

652826

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates — Prices as at 25/04/97 17:52

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7175	0.6158	1.4641	125.78	1.3981	1713.50	1.9327	5.8067
DE Mark	0.5822	-	0.3581	0.8525	73.21	0.8125	997.09	1.1249	3.3798
GB Sterling	1.6238	2.7910	-	2.3769	204.20	2.2670	2783.92	3.1401	9.4341
CH Franc	0.6830	1.1725	0.4202	-	85.90	0.9534	1168.39	131.84	3.9633
JP Yen	0.0080	1.3655	0.4892	1.1636	-	1.1098	13.61	153.62	4.6149
CA Dollar	0.7163	1.2297	0.4411	1.0474	1.11	-	1226.39	1.3834	4.1540
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0024	0.3591	0.8854	1364.26	0.8147	-	11.28	3.3876
NL Guilder	0.5174	88.87	0.3184	75.74	65.01	0.7223	886.27	-	3.0032
FR Franc	0.1722	0.2958	0.1060	25.2088	21.83	0.2404	33.28	33.2800	-

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7504	0.3770	3.6400	0.3040	3.6725	1539.50	3.3895
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2972	0.5324	5.1412	0.4294	5.1873	2174.44	4.7874
GB Sterling	0.2666	0.1888	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0811	0.98	410.49	0.9038
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8781	9.9488	-	9.66	0.8064	9.74	4083.88	8.9913
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0303	1.0303	-	0.0835	1.01	422.94	0.9312
Kuwait Dinar	3.2895	2.3289	12.3368	1.2408	11.97	-	12.08	5064.14	9.9312
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0212	0.1026	0.9911	0.0828	-	419.19	0.9229
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4599	2.4361	0.2449	2.3644	0.1975	2.3856	-	2.2017
Egyptian	0.2950	0.2089	1.1065	0.1112	1.0739	0.0897	1.0835	454.20	-

Energy

Brent	18.15	18.45
W. Texa	19.75	19.80
Bony	18.15	18.45
Dubai	16.90	16.57
UL Gas	193.00	188.00

Mid-East Currencies

SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4582	0.16421	0.39058	33.5435
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.46792	0.16768	0.39885	34.2538
KW Dinar	3.2895	5.65291	2.02593	4.81928	413.736
BH Dinar	2.7770	4.55789	1.63372	3.885	333.667
CY Pound	1.9458	3.3435	1.1979	2.8495	244.663

Metal Prices

	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	342.2	342.7
Silver (oz's)	4.74	4.76
Platinum (oz's)	380	381
AL (3 Months)	1596	1597
CU (3 Months)	2366	2369
Zinc (3 Months)	1270	1271
Lead (3 Months	0	0
NI (3 Months)	7430	7450

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period / Ccy	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year
USD	5.56	5.70	5.93	6.10	6.27
GBP	6.12	6.40	6.62	6.75	6.75
JPY	0.53	0.56	0.44	0.62	0.68
DEM	2.94	3.12	3.06	3.06	3.12
FRF	3.30	3.44	3.54	3.56	3.58
CHF	1.50	1.62	1.58	1.71	1.75
ITL	6.99	6.98	6.93	6.86	6.67

Main Equity Indicies

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
NewYork	DOW JONES	6729.64	-62.61	-0.92	6792.25	6729.24	6792.25
Newyork	S&P 500	766.02	-5.16	-0.67	771.18	766.02	771.18
London	FT-SE 100	4364.8	-23.7	-0.54	4385.7	4364.4	4388.5
Tokyo	NIKKIE 225	18612.86	-85.21	-0.46	18848.6	18571.4	18698.1
Paris	CAC 40	2530.15	-9.68	-0.38	2550.08	2526.66	2539.83
Frankfurt	DAX	3374.1	-23.28	-0.68	3392.73	3372.28	3397.38

Energy

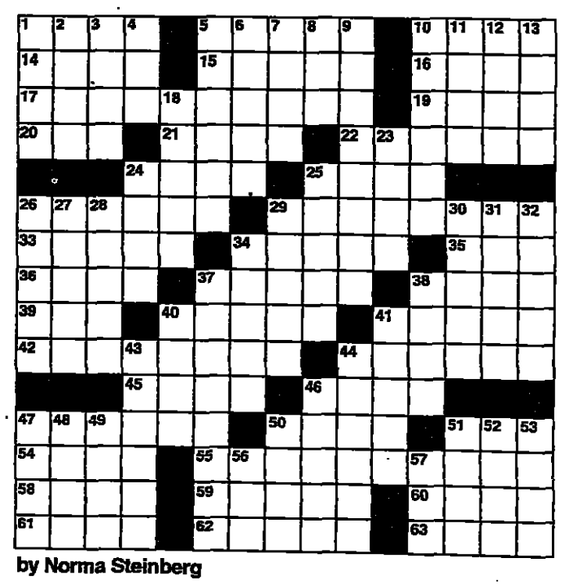
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	220.33	Spot
Cocoa ($/ton)	1493	Spot
Sugar ($/ton)	318.5	Spot
Wheat ($/ton)	175	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	24.1	Spot
Tea (stg/kg)	144	Spot
Barley ($/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice ($/ton)	480	Spot

*** JOD Cross Rates**

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.151	1.1568
DE Mark	0.4126	0.4147
CH Franc	0.4833	0.4857
FR Franc	0.1223	0.1229
JP Yen	0.5601	0.5629
NL Guilder	0.3667	0.3685
IT Lira	0.4147	0.4168

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword



ACROSS
1 Grate
5 Moisten the bird
10 Huff and puff
14 Aloft
15 White-barked tree
16 Pathway
17 Used
19 Machu Picchu builder
20 Singer Garfunkel
21 Ripening factor
22 Smart comeback
24 Flat
25 Army post
26 Coins
29 Occupants
33 Prospero's servant
34 The wealthy
35 VFW member
36 Lecherous expression
37 Demolishes
38 Used to be
39 Sch. subj.
40 Cut in half
41 Whittle
42 Vacillated
44 Seasoned
45 Tennis star Lendl
46 Clammy
47 Ex
50 Alone
51 Faux —
54 Jai —
55 Stone broke
58 Armstrong or Diamond
59 African antelope
60 Veggie
61 Auctioneer's word
62 Contemporary of Monet
63 Toothed wheel

DOWN
1 Bus heroine, Parks
2 Swear
3 Faction
4 In favor of
5 Harass
6 Pale
7 Mast
8 Decimal system base
9 Target for tight ends
10 Thin pancake
11 Auld — syne
12 — in a blue moon
13 Fray
18 Kind of orange
23 Part of the eye
24 Happily — after
25 More than 98.6
26 Markdowns
27 Actress Dunne
28 Sovereign
29 Stupefied
30 Chris of tennis
31 Chutzpah
32 Horse
34 Sanctuary
37 Compensated
38 Traffic sign
40 Put in the bank
41 Basic principal
43 Comparison
44 Greens dishes
46 TV mom, Reed
47 Phyllis Diller's "husband"
48 Bread spread
49 Precipitation
50 Valance
51 Pig in a —
52 Subtle air
53 Lead actor
56 Bullfight yell
57 Pooch

by Norma Steinberg

M	A	L	T	■	■	T	O	G	O	■	L	A	N	K
I	R	O	N	■	B	A	T	O	N	■	E	V	E	N
L	I	N	T	■	O	R	I	E	L	■	S	O	M	E
L	A	G	■	C	R	O	S	S	O	F	S	N	O	W
■	■	F	R	U	I	T	■	■	O	R	O	■	■	■
G	R	E	E	T	S	■	L	I	K	E	N	E	S	S
R	O	L	L	S	■	M	A	T	E	D	■	V	E	T
I	D	L	Y	■	S	E	D	E	R	■	P	A	N	E
N	E	O	■	S	H	O	E	R	■	D	O	N	N	E
D	O	W	N	T	O	W	N	■	C	O	U	G	A	R
■	■	■	O	A	R	■	■	M	A	T	T	E	■	■
M	Y	L	O	S	T	Y	O	U	T	H	■	L	I	S
S	E	E	S	■	C	U	R	S	E	■	P	I	C	A
G	A	V	E	■	U	M	B	E	R	■	A	N	O	N
T	R	I	S	■	T	A	S	S	■	■	R	E	N	D

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HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Stay around creative, energetic individuals who can give you some new ideas. Take it easy tonight with your mate, and get plenty of rest since the days ahead likely will be quite tension filled with your career activities.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) This is the right time today to sit down with your mate and work out a more practical budget which will give you both extra funds for an emergency. This will make you both happier in the days ahead and lead to more harmony.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If you want to gain your aims quickly, sociability is very important today. Be most careful in motion, especially while driving on the highway and thereby avoid any obstacles which could develop in your path.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be sure to handle credit and community matter with care and intelligence today, thereby avoiding any difficult situations. Show your appreciation to people who have help you by doing something special for them.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Plan a trip today which will bring you much more success in the days ahead, however count the cost carefully before you make any firm decisions. Later this evening will be good for meeting with knowledgeable people for their advice.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) If you are having difficulties advancing, try a new approach. Be more gentle and understanding to your mate, and you will both be happier in your lives and thereby establish a sense of harmony which will be appreciated.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You'll have a chance to benefit from a new opportunity, so be alert today and thereby you can be quite successful. A fellow associate may want to make revision to an agreement, listen to what is stated, however you should stick to your guns on all the points.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) A fellow associate will have an idea which could be helpful today in oganising a new project, so accept it. Take it easy later this evening and rest up for the days will be quite hectic with career activities.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a good day today to start career activities and get great results on a pet project. Go out for some fun recreational activities with your friends later this evening and you can all enjoy yourselves.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Show more affection for your loved ones and create a more harmonious atmosphere at home which will be very much appreciated. This is a good evening to entertain friends at home so be the perfect host.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) A dynamic fellow associate has some ideas today which can increase your business interests considerably, so seek these out and use them to your advantage. Later this evening will be good for meeting with fellow associates.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You can get involved today in a new financial enterprise which has fine possibilities. Consult with an expert on this matter. Later this evening you can go out on the town your mate to a romantic location.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Aqel outlines main points in CBJ drive to liberalise currency controls

** FOUR MONTHS ago, the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) announced a set of liberalisation measures that gave the banks in Jordan wider freedom in managing their assets in foreign currencies. The new measures revealed last week are a step forward towards further liberalisation and flexibility as well as a push to develop the monetary and financial markets.

Mufleh Aqel, a senior executive banker and an economic analyst, said the new measures would totally liberalise external paymens except capital transfers Mr. Aqel listed the following points contained in the proposed CBJ regulations:

— Allowing forward buying/selling transactions without ceilings.

— Allowing companies to keep foreign currencies up to the equivalent of JD1 million. Individual can keep unlimited amount of foreign currencies.

— Giving the banks wider leeway in investing their foreign currency assets in financial instruments under the supervision of the CBJ to safeguard the interests of banks and depositors.

— Reducing restrictions on lending in foreign currencies by cancelling the prior approval of the CBJ and widening the scope of areas which can benefit from such lending.

— Allowing to cover the costs of goods imported for the free zone through the banks and also allowing the banks to extend direct credit to finance imports to the free zone.

Mr. Aqel commented on these measures by indicating that their significance was not in their direct importance but rather in their indirect benefit of creating financial and monetary instruments in the market. Such instruments, he pointed out would help widen and activate financial operations and provide tools to cover risks.

Mutee' Al Kabariti, a moneychanger, saw the most important part in the removal of restrictions on gold. Noting that Syria and a number of neighbouring countries have restrictions, Mr. Kabariti saw Jordan emerging as a centre for importing, manufacturing and exporting jewellery. He said the CBJ's drive towards wider liberalisation of foreign currency regulation would improve the investment climate as investors would be free to bring in and take out funds without any impediment. He added that the proposed measures would restore public confidence in the national currency and prompt savers to switch from dollar back to dinar savings.

Wahib Shair, director-general of the Amman Financial Market expected higher confidence among foreign investors in the Jordanian economy and the financial market as a result of the CBJ plan. Similar views were expressed by Wasef Azer, the general manager of the Jordan National Bank, who saw the proposed measures as a step forward to emphasise Jordan's capability to open up to the world. He called for even wider liberalisation to the extent of reducing the CBJ's role to mere work of general supervision and statistical complication (Al Ra'i).

Large group of investors begins Jordan visit today

** THE LARGEST group of portfolio investors ever to visit Jordan will arrive in Amman today. The visit is within a regional tour of the Arab Stock markets organised by ING Barings. The Amman Financial Market has prepared a visit programme for the portfolio investors that include meetings with the deputy prime minister, the CBJ governor and his deputy, and the head of the privatisation unit. The group will also meet with representatives from Arab Potash, Jordan Cement, Zara Investments, Housing Bank and Century Investment Group (Special to J.T).

IMF defends economic globalisation

(Continued from page 8)

developing world will experience its fifth straight year of economic growth in 1997, averaging 6.5 per cent.

The growth would increase in Latin America to 4.4 per cent, from 3.5 per cent in 1996 and 1.3 per cent in 1995.

That includes a prediction of 4.5 per cent expansion in Mexico, which had a surprising growth rate of 5.1 per cent in 1996 after a decline of 6.2 per cent in 1995, the IMF said, adding that inflation in Mexico should ease to below 20 per cent from 34 per cent in 1996.

Argentina's growth is expected to be around five per cent this year, up from a 4.4 per cent increase in 1996 and a comparable contraction in 1995.

In Africa, the five per cent growth rate of 1996 was the best in a decade for the continent, the IMF said. That rate should continue in 1997, with growth of 4.7 per cent predicted for the continent overall.

The strongest growth in Africa should be in Ivory Coast (six per cent), Cameroon (5.1 per cent), and Tunisia and Uganda (seven per cent each).

In Asia, the IMF said growth in 1997 should remain strong at 8.3 per cent, comparable to the 8.2 per cent level of 1996 but down from the 8.9 per cent rate of 1995.

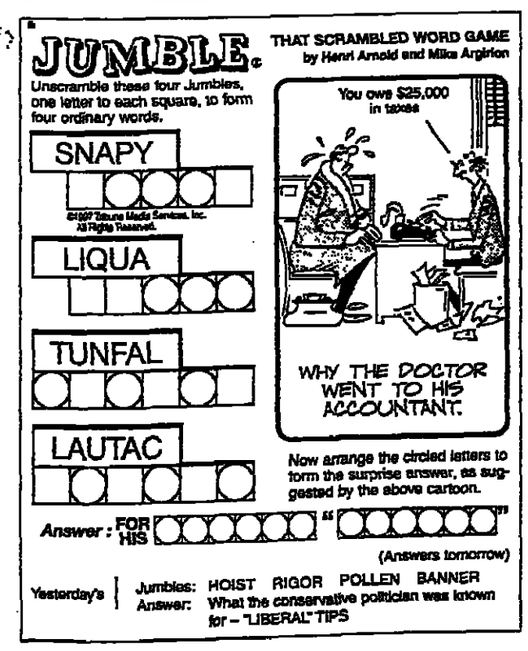
The slowdown has been felt in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, where exports have slowed and governments have sought to reduce the risks of overheating.

In China, the IMF predicted 1997 would be similar to 1996 with 9.7 per cent growth and inflation of around six per cent.

India's growth rate is expected to decline slightly to 6.6 per cent from 6.9 per cent in 1996, the report said.



"Last night, instead of watching television, Stanley and I had a long talk. We talked about television."



AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (19/04/1997 - 23/04/1997)
WEEKLY REPORT

DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	No. OF CONTRACT	No. OF SHARES EXECUTED	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE MARKET PRICE	TURNOVER SHARES	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
258.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	11.7	1.57	17	1300	332580	256.00	257.00	255.00	255.00	- 1.00	255.831	.030	3
1.900	1.790	JOR.NATIONAL BK.	-	0.00	18	15843	28669	1.80	1.82	1.80	1.81	+ .01	1.810	.038	3
4.750	4.100	CAIRO AMMAN BANK	9.3	3.33	3	3400	15000	4.30	4.50	4.30	4.50	+ .20	4.412	.034	2
2.960	2.800	BANK OF JORDAN	10.5	0.00	3	163	469	2.92	2.90	2.84	2.90	- .02	2.877	.002	1
1.050	.970	MID.EAST INV.BK.	64.4	0.00	2	500	490	1.00	.98	.98	.98	- .02	.980	.005	1
2.320	2.290	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	5.4	5.92	2	350	823	2.36	2.35	2.35	2.35	+ .05	2.351	.001	1
4.900	4.700	THE HOUSING BK.	13.1	2.83	16	6820	33340	4.90	4.90	4.87	4.88	- .02	4.881	.027	2
2.710	2.640	JOR.KUWAIT BANK	19.2	0.00	7	875	2321	2.68	2.66	2.65	2.65	- .03	2.653	.009	2
.860	.800	JOR.GULF BANK	4.9	8.54	8	11000	9000	.81	.82	.81	.82	+ .01	.818	.055	3
3.600	3.600	ARAB JOR.INV.BK.	19.3	0.00	1	750	2700	3.60	3.60	3.60	3.60	-	3.600	.008	1
3.830	3.750	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	18.3	0.00	11	657	2505	3.76	3.82	3.79	3.81	+ .05	3.813	.005	1
1.450	1.440	UNION BK.SAV.INV.	100.4	0.00	6	2205	3109	1.44	1.42	1.40	1.40	- .04	1.410	.025	3
1.250	1.040	EGYT.AL-MAL (EGYPT)	.7	12.61	2	500	595	1.19	1.19	1.19	1.19	-	1.190	.025	1
1.150	1.100	PHILADEL.INV.BK.	-	0.00	8	3800	4198	1.15	1.15	1.10	1.10	- .05	1.105	.038	2
BANKS SECTOR					105	48214	435922	INDEX NUMBER : 193.43				CHANGE :- 0.27%			
1.710	1.640	JOR.ELECTRIC POW.	11.7	7.14	18	5087	8542	1.67	1.68	1.67	1.68	+ .01	1.679	.034	3
8.000	8.000	JOR.HOTEL TOURISM	11.5	1.38	1	1000	8000	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	-	8.000	.020	1
1.450	1.450	IRBID ELECTRICITY	9.5	6.90	1	500	725	1.45	1.45	1.45	1.45	-	1.450	.017	1
7.350	7.000	VEHLS. OWNERS FED.	7.8	4.93	4	3072	21904	7.00	7.10	7.00	7.10	+ .10	7.098	.512	2
4.500	4.300	ARAB INTL.HOTELS	17.2	2.96	9	3450	14770	4.50	4.34	4.25	4.34	- .16	4.281	.038	2
1.060	.930	HAEL. PORTFOLIO	-	0.00	14	3250	3289	1.02	1.02	1.00	1.00	- .02	1.012	.065	2
.900	.870	REAL ESTATE INV.	12.5	6.67	2	550	495	.90	.90	.90	.90	-	.900	.012	1
.520	.480	JORDAN INTL.TRAD.	25.7	0.00	6	3850	1908	.49	.50	.49	.50	+ .01	.496	.113	3
3.090	2.990	ARAB INTL.INV.EDUC.	12.1	6.56	5	2038	6220	3.05	3.06	3.05	3.06	+ .01	3.052	.020	3
1.000	.970	BANKA EDUCATION	-	0.00	4	1150	1116	.99	.97	.97	.97	- .02	.970	.026	1
1.700	1.660	UNIFIED CO.	8.0	6.52	10	8500	14368	1.69	1.70	1.69	1.69	-	1.690	.170	2
.730	.710	UNION LAND DEV.	-	0.00	1	50	35	.71	.70	.70	.70	- .01	.700	.001	1
SERVICES SECTOR					75	52697	81271	INDEX NUMBER : 101.26				CHANGE :- 0.89%			
3.650	3.500	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	21.6	2.65	69	22953	80103	3.65	3.80	3.67	3.77	+ .12	3.751	.038	3
3.250	3.150	JOR.PHOSPHATE MINES	34.4	0.00	10	50400	161280	3.15	3.20	3.20	3.20	+ .05	3.200	.115	2
6.100	5.950	ARAB POTASH CO.	17.9	3.39	4	2500	14855	5.98	5.95	5.90	5.90	- .08	5.941	.003	2
10.300	10.110	JOR. PETROL.REFINERY	10.3	7.84	29	3453	35134	10.13	10.25	10.10	10.20	+ .07	10.175	.054	3
2.260	2.160	INDUSTRIAL COMM.AGR.	27.4	0.00	24	6552	13927	2.21	2.20	2.04	2.04	- .17	2.126	.131	3
3.720	3.640	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	20.6	5.33	51	13250	49847	3.65	3.80	3.69	3.75	+ .10	3.762	.147	2
7.070	6.550	JOR.CERAMIC IND.	8.7	3.57	4	400	2816	7.00	7.05	7.01	7.01	+ .01	7.040	.016	3
2.300	2.250	JORDAN DAIRY	7.6	10.86	1	50	113	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	-	2.260	.001	1
1.560	1.490	JOR.PIPES MANFCT.	8.5	7.84	3	430	648	1.50	1.53	1.50	1.53	+ .03	1.507	.013	2
3.010	2.860	JOR.PAPER CARBRD.	14.7	3.50	2	326	932	2.86	2.86	2.86	2.86	-	2.859	.011	1
1.230	1.220	RAFIA INDUSTRIES	149.3	0.00	1	250	295	1.22	1.18	1.18	1.18	- .04	1.180	.025	1
4.800	4.730	DAR ALDAWA DV.INV.	13.5	4.04	5	516	2448	4.80	4.75	4.90	4.95	+ .15	4.934	.004	2
3.440	3.300	ARAB ALUM. IND.	8.5	8.77	9	1275	4292	3.31	3.42	3.30	3.42	+ .11	3.366	.021	2
.570	.540	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	11.4	0.00	20	21000	11422	.55	.56	.54	.54	- .01	.544	.436	3
1.100	1.040	ARAB PAPER CONV.IND.	10.8	6.51	11	3900	4149	1.09	1.07	1.06	1.06	- .03	1.064	.111	3
.620	.580	NATIONAL INDS.	8.9	10.00	10	12150	7290	.60	.68	.60	.60	-	.600	.203	3
.820	.720	INTERNED.PETRO.CHEM.	-	0.00	19	6900	5284	.77	.78	.76	.76	- .01	.766	.173	2
2.250	2.180	UNIV.CHEM.INDS.	56.8	0.00	2	250	542	2.18	2.18	2.15	2.15	- .03	2.168	.017	1
2.560	2.300	NATL.CABLE WIRE.MFAC	17.0	0.00	15	3438	9594	2.50	2.79	2.50	2.79	+ .29	2.638	.073	3
.790	.570	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	-	0.00	44	35200	27075	.75	.79	.75	.77	+ .02	.769	.880	3
1.420	1.380	ARAB PHARM.CHEM.	26.4	0.00	13	3900	5546	1.40	1.43	1.41	1.41	+ .01	1.422	.078	3
1.560	1.420	UNIV. HOSP.INDS.	4.5	13.51	51	18950	27712	1.49	1.48	1.44	1.48	- .01	1.462	.379	3
1.330	1.170	JOR.INDS.RESOURCES	15.9	8.47	16	4000	4759	1.19	1.21	1.18	1.18	- .01	1.190	.050	3
.900	.870	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	24.2	0.00	45	44150	38983	.88	.89	.88	.89	+ .01	.883	.552	2
1.800	1.780	EL -EAT READY WEAR	142.2	0.00	8	2783	4925	1.79	1.78	1.77	1.77	- .02	1.770	.037	3
1.190	1.160	INTL. TOBACCO	27.3	0.00	22	9046	10518	1.17	1.17	1.16	1.16	- .01	1.163	.090	3
.970	.900	UNION CH. & VEG.	28.8	0.00	14	4800	4382	.92	.92	.91	.91	- .01	.913	.107	3
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR					502	273022	534967	INDEX NUMBER : 117.73				CHANGE :+ 0.55%			
GRAND TOTAL					682	353733	1052160	INDEX NUMBER : 152.83				CHANGE :+ 0.02%			

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DAILY AVERAGE OF TRADING VOLUME : JD 350,720
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by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion
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TUNFAL
LAUTAC
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WHY THE DOCTOR WENT TO HIS ACCOUNTANT.
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.
Answer : FOR HIS
(Answers tomorrow)
Yesterday's Jumbles: HOIST RIGOR POLLEN BANNER
Answer: What the conservative politician was known for – "LIBERAL" TIPS

Heat beat Magic as Jazz, Knicks win NBA playoff openers

MIAMI (R) — The Miami Heat stifled the Orlando Magic attack and crushed their intrastate rivals 99-64 on Thursday in the opening game of their Eastern Conference first-round series.

Voshon Lenard scored 11 of his 24 points in the first quarter as Miami mounted a 25-point lead that paved the way for a lopsided victory.

Alonzo Mourning added 12 points, 11 rebounds and six blocked shots for Miami, which held the Magic to a playoff record-tying low, set last year by Portland against Utah.

"They were stunned that we came out that quickly and on fire like that," said Heat point guard Tim Hardaway. "We played all-around good defence, we made them take tough shots and earn them. We played hard-nosed Miami Heat defence."

Miami led 13-8 before ending the first quarter on a 22-2 run. Lenard and Mourning each scored six points and Tim Hardaway had five as the heat built a 35-10 cushion.

The Heat, melded together by defensive-minded coach Pat Riley, won their first Atlantic Division title this season and set a franchise record with 61 victories.

The Magic shot 17 per cent (4-for-23) from the field in the first quarter. Overall, they shot 30.6 percent (26-of-85) for the game. Orlando went almost nine minutes between its last basket of the first quarter and first of the second.

In New York, the New York Knicks turned the tables on the sharp-shooting Charlotte Hornets Thursday by pouring in 10 three-pointers on the way to a 109-99 win in the opener of their Eastern Conference first-round series.

Allan Houston scored 13 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter and had three of New York's five three-pointers in the period to spur the Knicks after the Hornets had overcome a 13-point deficit to knot the score 75-75 after three quarters.

"What beat us was their outside three-point shooting. They beat us with our own weapon," said Charlotte centre Vlade Divac, who outscored Knicks counterpart Patrick Ewing 27-15.

Charlotte, which shot a league-best 43 per cent from three-point range during the season, had won three of four regular season contests against the Knicks.

"We shot the ball extremely well. I thought we moved the ball well. We did a good job offensively," said New York coach Jeff Van Gundy.

Larry Johnson scored 20 points, 17 points in the first half, and sixth man award winner John Starks added 19 off the bench for the Knicks.

Glen Rice added 22 for the Hornets, who lost guard Mugsy Bogues to a recurring hamstring injury in the third quarter.

In Houston, Mario Elie scored 21 points and Hakeem Olajuwon had 18 and 11 rebounds to lead the Houston Rockets to a 112-95 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves in game one of their Western Conference first-round series.

Charles Barkley added 15 points and 11 rebounds for Houston, which out rebounded Minnesota 58-36. The Rockets' bench outscored the Timberwolves' reserves 36-17.

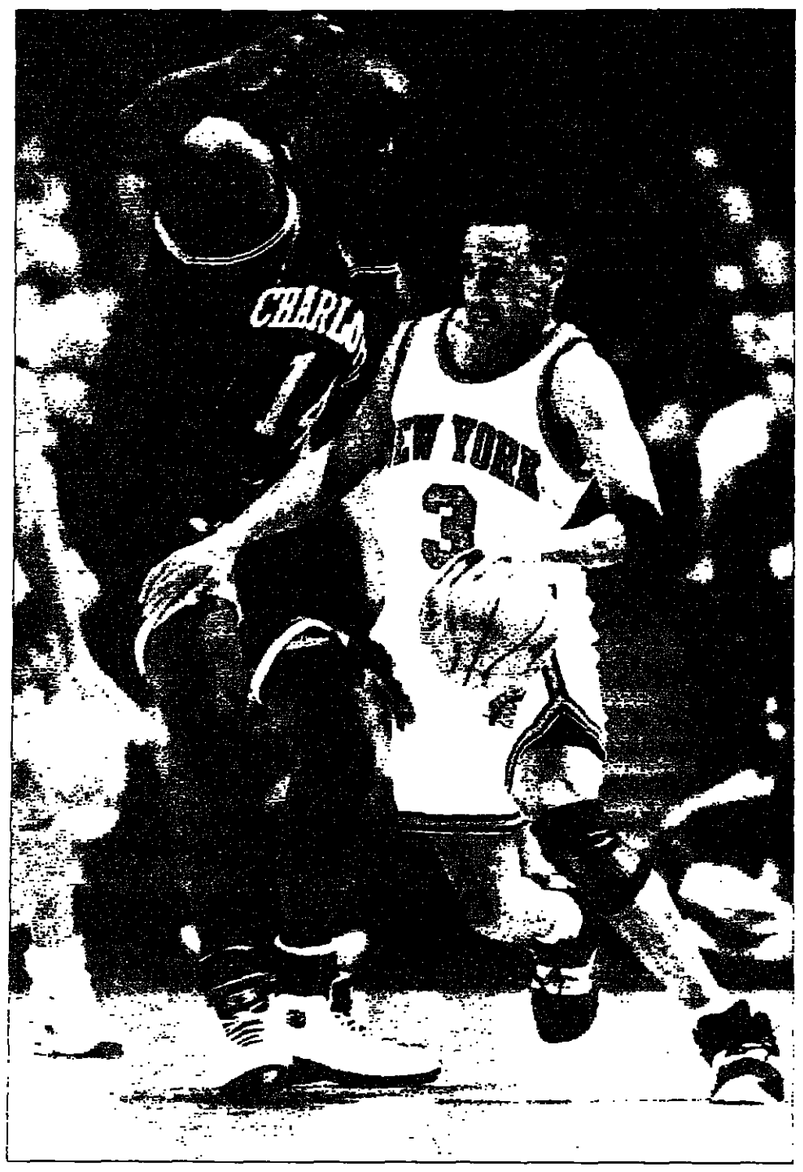
"The margin of victory doesn't mean anything," said Barkley. "They'll be more determined in the next game. We're glad to get the first one out of the way."

Stephon Marbury had 28 points and Kevin Garnett added 21 for the Wolves, who are in the playoffs for the first time in their eight-year history.

In Houston, Karl Malone scored 27 points and grabbed 10 rebounds and John Stockton added 13 points and 17 assists as the Utah Jazz jolted the Los Angeles Clippers 106-86 in the first game of their Western Conference opening-round series.

The Jazz used a 15-4 burst bridging the third and fourth quarters to break open a tight game and continue their dominance at home.

Bryon Russell added 16 points as seven Utah players scored in double figures. The Jazz, who took three of four from Los Angeles in the regular season, went 38-3 at home this season.



New York Knicks guard John Starks pushes past former teammate and Charlotte Hornetts forward Anthony Mason (L) in the fourth period of their NBA playoff game at New York's Madison Square Garden. Knicks won the first game of the five game series 109-99 (Reuters photo)

1st Division Basketball Championship

Jazireh top standings after beating Orthodoxi 62-54

By Aleen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Jazireh conclude their first round matches Saturday when they play Al Hussein in Irbid in the First Division Basketball Championship.

While they started the competition as the Kingdom's third ranked team, Al Jazireh now enter Saturday's match with different spirits.

After coming close to the title in the past two seasons, Al Jazireh have gone a step further this season and seem to be no longer settling for finishing behind all-time rivals Al Ahli and Al Orthodoxi — two teams who have dominated the scene for as long as fans can remember.

The fight for the title has become a three way race that now seems to be tilting in Al Jazireh's favour as they are currently atop the standings after their 62-54 win over titleholders Al Orthodoxi Thursday night. Al Jazireh last week also beat Al Ahli 85-57.

Al Jazireh took a commanding 23-5 at the start match and led throughout although Al Orthodoxi, who played one of their worst games, managed to somewhat close the gap 23-16 before Al Jazireh ended the first half 35-24.

Al Orthodoxi caught up at 48-45 but Al Jazireh held on to their lead at 58-51 before winning the match with an eight point difference.

While Al Orthodoxi had hoped to win the title for the third consecutive year after ending Al Ahli's short-lived reign two season's ago, the players' form has been inconsistent, unlike Al Jazireh who seem to have undoubtedly benefited form their participation in the Arab Clubs tournament in Tunisia last month.

On the other hand, former champions Al Ahli, who had a hard time scoring a 67-54 win over Al Jalil, still seem in an unenviable situation before their match with Al Orthodoxi.

Al Ahli have been trying to regroup and upgrade their faltering form by putting their house in order.

New Armenian coach Raffi Cholukyan was handed the reigns following the team's humiliating defeat to Al Jazireh.

Cholukyan, a former head coach of the Soviet Unions' national teams was recruited for the purpose of taking over the clubs' teams with the aim of taking Al Ahli to new heights after they failed to win the title during the past two seasons.

He takes over from Ghaith Najjar, Al Ahli's coach for the past two seasons, during which the team was unable to reclaim the title and have been in a slumping form ever since.

Many top players like Naser Bushnaq, Yousef Zaghloul and Marwan Ma'touq have since left the team.

Al Ahli were previously trained by Ukrainian coach Alexander Sacha who guided the team to a 1990 win ending Al Orthodoxi's 1976-1989 reign atop the Kingdom's basketball scene.

Al Ahli went on to win the crown in 1992, 93, 94 before Sacha left his post after apparent differences with the board.

Team	P	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Jazireh	3	3	-	261	136	6
Orthodoxi	3	2	1	234	182	5
Ahli	3	2	1	197	184	5
Jalil	4	1	3	222	306	5
Hussein	3	-	3	141	247	3
*Yarmouk	-	-	-	-	-	-

Relegated to 2nd division

Unclear application of JBF rules might lead to player's suspension

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Due to the laxity in applying rules by the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF), the signing of a young player could end up creating one of the biggest controversies in the Kingdom's basketball scene.

After playing only two matches this season, Ahmad Ismail, a new Orthodoxi player, has now been suspended by the JBF until a ruling in today's session clears his as well as his team's status.

According to JBF regulations, a club should present complete official documents for a players' registration before being issued the identity card that allows him to play with the team.

Ismail was recently registered as an Orthodoxi player and played for his team against Al Jalil and Al Hussein — two matches in which Al Orthodoxi won.

The problem arose after it was noticed that Ismail was on Al Orthodoxi's line-up although the JBF had refused his registration with Al Jazireh earlier on basis that he does not hold all his official papers especially a document that shows he is the holder of Jordanian nationality — a prerequisite by the JBF in all local competitions

Al Orthodoxi's basketball official, Rizek Al Masri, said that the JBF had allowed Ismail to play for Al Orthodoxi.

"We presented the JBF the documents we had and he was issued a player's card and therefore played in both matches," Masri told the Jordan Times.

JBF secretary Nimer Hudaib explained that the federation had issued the player a card since the club had promised to complete Ismail's papers.

"We asked Al Orthodoxi for the player's complete papers and we waited for the reply based on a word of trust," Hudaib told the Jordan Times.

"After looking into the issue, we found out that the player was still without a Jordanian passport and only had a birth certificate so we asked Al Orthodoxi Club to suspend him from playing," Hudaib noted.

Masri said that the player will not play until his documents are complete.

"Until we complete his papers he will not be playing in the team's upcoming matches," Masri said.

According to JBF rules the player might now be suspended, thus missing the entire session and his team might be fined for enlisting a non-Jordanian player. Teams beaten by Al Orthodoxi in both matches might now lodge formal complaints with the JBF asking for rematches.

Chang survives upset scare at U.S. clay championships

ORLANDO (R) — Michael Chang survived an upset scare on Thursday at the $289,250 U.S. men's clay court championships, advancing to the quarter-finals after Juan Albert Viloca served for the match against him.

Viloca, ranked 79th and one of a sudden slew of Spaniards in the top 100, bounced back after a one-sided first set to give Chang a mighty battle before the American prevailed 6-2 6-7 (3-7) 7-5.

Petr Korda of the Czech Republic was not so fortunate and became the only seed to fall in second-round play Thursday.

Korda, seeded third in the tournament, never looked in the match as he went down to unseeded clay court specialist Marcelo Filippini of Uruguay 6-3 6-1.

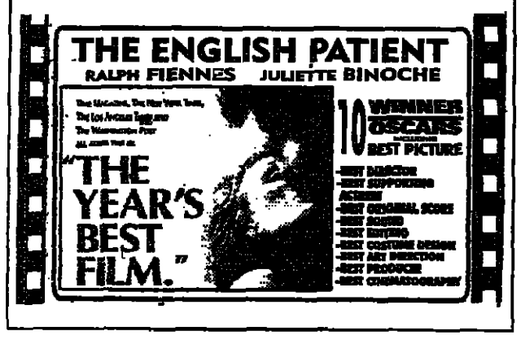
Fifth-seeded Jason Stoltenberg of Australia advanced to the quarters with a 7-6 (7-3) 6-4 victory over Sweden's unseeded Magnus Norman. Stoltenberg will face Filippini next.

Byron Black, the seventh seed from Zimbabwe, earned a quarter-final match with Chang after defeating Dennis Van Scheppingen of the Netherlands 7-6 (8-6) 3-6 6-3.

Chang, who will rise to number two in the world on Monday, controlled the match in the first set with Viloca, but things turned around dramatically after Chang failed to serve out the match at 5-4 in the second set.

Viloca, a versatile groundstroker with a stinging forehand and unpredictable variety, took charge, hitting winners all over the court to take the set to the tiebreaker.

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European Cup Winner's Cup

Holders Paris St Germain lose but reach final

LIVERPOOL (R) — Holders Paris Saint Germain were beaten 2-0 by Liverpool in their European Cup Winners Cup semifinal second leg at Anfield on Thursday but survived to clinch a place in the final 3-2 on aggregate.

Liverpool, playing with unrelenting pace and passion in contrast to their poor display in the first leg, scored after 12 minutes when Robbie Fowler fired home with an angled left-foot volley and added a second after 79 minutes when Mark Wright headed powerfully home from a corner.

But despite almost non-stop attacking by the English side, whose manager Roy Evans dropped skipper John Barnes for the first time in almost a decade, the French side held out.

Stan Collymore, Jamie Redknapp and Stig Inge Bjornebye all went close to reducing the deficit for Liverpool in the first half, and although Liverpool did not create as many chances in the second, they were camped in PSG's half of the field virtually throughout the second period.

PSG rarely created a scoring chance, their most clear-cut opportunity coming in the second minute when Patrice Loko broke through the defence and shot narrowly wide from an acute angle.



Germany's Michael Schumacher watches from the pit wall during the first timed practice for the San Marino Formula One Grand Prix. Schumacher clocked the fastest time and set a new track record at 1:25.977 (Reuters photo)

Third time lucky for Olympiakos in European Basketball Cup

ROME (R) — "The third time pays for all," says an old Greek proverb and so it proved — gloriously, noisily and at long last for Olympiakos, the new European basketball champions.

After defeats in the finals of 1994 and 1995, Olympiakos took the final four title at Rome's Palaeur Stadium, packed to its 12,000 capacity on Thursday, beating Barcelona 73-58 thanks largely to another irresistible performance by American playmaker David Rivers.

Once a team mate of Magic Johnson at Los Angeles Lakers, Rivers top-scored with 26 points, just two fewer than the 28 he notched up to help sink Ljubljana of Slovenia in Tuesday's semifinals.

Coach Dusan Ivkovic was reluctant to single out Rivers but knows just how influential he was during the tournament and the lengthy qualifying which brought the Greek club to Rome.

Olympiakos struggled with injuries earlier in the season and after the first 16 games of qualifying had a modest 9-7 record. Many thought their title hopes would end in the quarter-finals against holders Panathinaikos, who had home advantage but Olympiakos won a remarkable game 69-49.

Rivers, carried high by his team mates on Thursday, said: "There have been a lot of doubts through the year but we just stayed focused and kept our sights on our goal." The raucous ranks of the 7,000 Olympiakos faithful had to suffer for a while before that goal was finally achieved.

Seven minutes into the game the Greek side had only two points on the board (2-9) and it was not until five minutes before halftime that they edged ahead at 20-18.

Thanks to 14 points from Rivers they went into half-time leading 31-29 and then, in a key phase after the break, they confined Barcelona to just nine points in nine minutes, opening up a double-figure margin and then holding on comfortably.

Ivkovic said: "It was rather difficult for us at the beginning but afterwards we got control. We defended very well and we blocked Sasha Djordjevic."

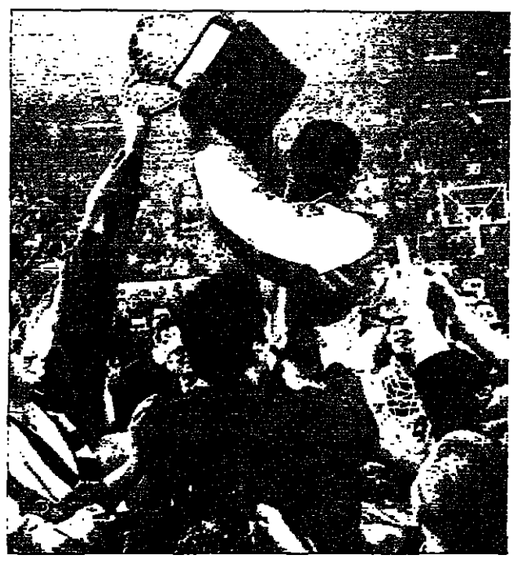
The brilliant Serb has turned round Barcelona's season since his arrival in Spain in January and in style and influence he was every bit a match for Rivers, at least in the first half.

But he was less evident in the second period and had an off-night with his shooting, scoring just six points against his average for Barcelona of 14.

Losing coach Aito Garcia Reneses said: "The main problem for us was that we did not play as we usually do." Ivkovic paid tribute to the Olympiakos fans. "They are unique in the world," he told reporters. "Without them basketball would not have the importance it has now."

For the 3,000 or so Barcelona fans there was more heartache to heap on last year's when their club lost by just one point to Panathinaikos in controversial circumstances. They have now lost four finals in six appearances in the final four since 1989.

Next year the tournament is in Barcelona, raising the Spanish team's hopes that home advantage might bring success at last.



David Rivers (C) of Greek side Olympiakos raises the cup after the European Final Four basketball final championship match in Rome. Olympiakos defeated Barcelona 73-58 to take the title (Reuters photo)

World Cup qualifiers

Jordan, UAE clash today for Group 3 qualifying berth

By Aleen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter



JORDAN NATIONAL soccer team aim for a win Saturday hoping to qualify to the second round of the World Cup qualifiers for the first time when they meet the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the final game of the second leg/first round Asian Group 3 World Cup qualifying matches in Sharjah, the UAE.

The Kingdom's team has a hard task ahead having to beat Asia's second ranked team and a 1990 World Cup qualifier playing at home to secure the only qualifying berth from the group.

The UAE will automatically clinch the only qualifying berth from Group 3 if they beat Jordan.

Even a draw against the Kingdom's team be enough for the UAE to qualify.

The UAE have the group lead for now after their 3-0 win over Bahrain who dropped out of the race.

Jordan will qualify by 1-0 win although the two teams will tie in overall points and goal difference.

According to FIFA rules Jordan will be the qualifier on aggregate since their first round encounter ended 0-0.

Jordan is now second in the group after their 4-1 win over Bahrain which kept alive the Kingdom's qualifying chances after a dismal first leg showing in Manama, Bahrain where Jordan drew 0-0 with the UAE who beat Bahrain 2-1. Bahrain had then defeated Jordan 1-0.

Onlookers had criticised the team for not being able to score in both their first round matches.

Even in eight friendly internationals in preparation for the qualifiers, Jordan could only score 6 goals altogether. Jordan's record included three defeats, three goalless draws and two wins — 2-0 and 4-1 over Oman.

This is the fourth time Jordan plays in World Cup qualifying matches after taking part in first round qualifiers for Mexico '86, Italy '90 and USA '94.

Thirty-six Asian countries are contesting the first round World Cup qualifiers and have been divided into ten groups.

Group 1: Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Taiwan.
Group 2: Iran, Syria, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan.
Group 3: United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain.
Group 4: Japan, Oman, Nepal, Macao.
Group 5: Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia.
Group 6: South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong.
Group 7: Kuwait, Lebanon, Singapore.
Group 8: China, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, Tajikistan.
Group 9: Iraq, Pakistan, Kazakhstan.
Group 10: Qatar, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines.

The 10 groups winners will qualify for the second round, to be held in Singapore, where the teams will be divided into two groups.

The first two from each group will then contest the Asian finals.

The first three qualify directly for the 1998 World Cup in France while the winner of a play-off between the fourth team and the Oceania Zone winner will also qualify.

JTV coverage of last Group 3 match

UAE — Jordan	April 26	6:30 p.m.

GROUP 3 STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	D	GF	GA	Pts
UAE	3	2	-	1	5	1	7
Jordan	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
Bahrain	4	1	3	-	3	9	3

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GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH
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WATCH THOSE SPOTS

Both vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠A 10 6 4
♡A J 8
◇J 6 5 3 2
♣10

WEST
♠K J 7 2
♡6
◇Q 9 4
♣K Q 9 8 8

EAST
♠Q 9 8 5 3
♡9 5 4 2
◇10
♣5 4 3

SOUTH
♠Void
♡K Q 10 7 3
◇A K 7 6
♣A J 7 2

The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
Pass	Pass	1♡	Pass
3♡	Pass	6♡	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: King of ♣

Pay close attention to the fall of the cards. There is a lot to be learned from the cards that appear to a specific trick.

As a passed hand, North had a considerable problem about what to respond to partner's one-heart opening bid. Both one spade and two diamonds were possibilities, but each would misrepresent the hand slightly and might give rise to problems later. North settled on a jump to three hearts despite having only three-card support. (Normally, all initial and delayed jump raises show four-card support.) South needed no further encouragement to bid the heart slam.

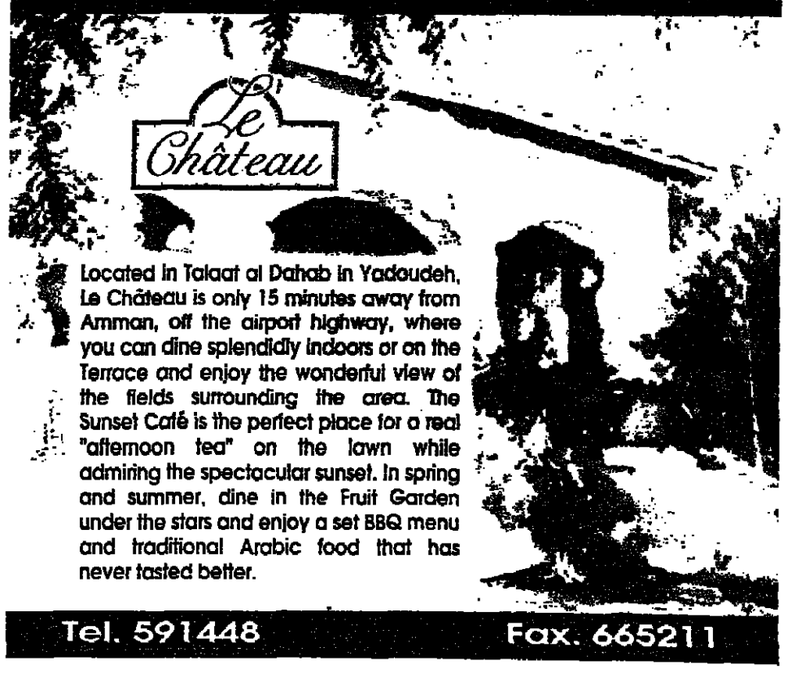
West led the king of clubs, giving the defense a shot, and declarer adopted a reasonable line. After winning the ace of clubs, declarer ruffed a club, entered the closed hand by leading a diamond to the king, then ruffed another club. After cashing the ace of spades for a club discard, followed by the ace of trumps, declarer came to hand with a spade ruff to draw another trump. When West showed out and the queen of diamonds failed to drop, the hand collapsed.

A better line of play is for declarer to win the ace of clubs at trick one, then cash the king of diamonds. When East drops the ten, declarer should exercise care. A trump to the ace provides the entry for a diamond to be led through East.

East cannot ruff this trick profitably — declarer will follow low and the suit will be set up. When East discards, declarer wins the ace of diamonds and continues the suit, conceding a trick to West's queen. No matter what the defense does thereafter, declarer can come to five trump tricks, four diamonds, the two minor-suit aces and a club ruff in dummy. If West exits with a spade, South can afford to ruff in hand, trump a club and then draw trumps. Dummy's remaining diamonds and spade ace take the last three tricks.

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Peres meets Shas leaders; reported to discuss toppling the government

Netanyahu's ally criticises his leadership, warns his party may quit fragile coalition

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel's opposition leader met Friday with senior figures in the ultra-orthodox Shas Party which is considering forcing early elections over a high-level influence-trading scandal.

The meeting between Labour Party head Shimon Peres and Shas' spiritual leader, Rabbi Ovadia Youssef, fueled some speculation that the two were discussing ways to topple Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's government and move up elections.

Netanyahu's ruling coalition has 66 seats in the 120-member parliament, and Shas, with 10 legislators, can deprive him of his parliamentary majority if it quits the coalition.

But Mr. Peres said the meeting focused on how to avoid a rift in the Israeli public over ethnic issues. "I don't see anyone racing to hold early elections," he told Israel Radio.

Shas is angry that only party leader Arieh Deri faces indictment in the affair involving Mr. Netanyahu's short-lived appointment of a political crony as attorney general. Police had recommended indictments against Mr. Deri, Mr. Netanyahu, his justice minister and the chief of the prime minister's bureau.

Shas claimed prosecutors made the decision based on ethnic considerations. Mr. Deri is a Sephardi Jew — of north African descent — while the other three are Ashkenazi, or of European descent.

A leading Shas figure, Rabbi David Yosef — son of Ovadia — said the party was considering quitting the government and forcing early elections. "It is possible we will initiate elections against this background and then we will meet at the polls, as they say," Mr. Youssef told Israel TV's Channel 2 on Thursday.

Shas leaders have said they were confident they could win many more seats in parliament because of an outpouring of support for Mr. Deri by Sephardi Jews who feel he is being treated unfairly by the Ashkenazi establishment.

In the meantime, Mr. Deri's supporters were circulating a petition among lawmakers from all parties to urge prosecutors to reverse their decision to indict the Shas leader, Israel Radio said.

The affair broke in January when Israel TV's Channel 1 reported that Mr. Deri pressured Mr. Netanyahu to appoint Jerusalem criminal lawyer Roni Bar-On as attorney general. In exchange, Mr. Deri promised Shas support in the cabinet for an Israeli troop pullback in Hebron, and Mr. Bar-On agreed to end Mr. Deri's corruption trial, the report said.

Mr. Bar-On, described as a legal lightweight, had already resigned before the TV report amid a deluge of criticism.

Wrapping up a three-month probe, the new attorney general said this week Mr. Deri should be indicted for blackmail, but that there was not enough evidence against Mr. Netanyahu, although the prime minister's behaviour in the affair "raises bewildering questions."

Opposition leaders have demanded that Mr. Netanyahu step down and left-wing supporters have been collecting 1,500 signatures this week on a petition demanding the establishment of an official commission of inquiry. Peres signed the petition Friday.

Immediately after the attorney general's announcement that he would not indict Mr. Netanyahu, the prime minister said he had made a mistake, then launched into a sharp attack on Channel 1.

The daily Maariv said Friday that Mr. Netanyahu's reaction was devised by Arthur Finkelstein, a campaign strategist who has worked for some of America's most formidable conservatives, including Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), and Senator Alfonse d'Amato (R-N.Y.).

Mr. Finkelstein, who engineered Mr. Netanyahu's election campaign, was summoned to Israel as soon as the police recommended last week to indict the prime minister.

Mr. Finkelstein was previously flown in during two earlier crises to advise the prime minister on how to respond, Maariv said.

Netanyahu's spokesmen were off for the Passover holiday and could not immediately be reached for comment.

Sharansky doubts premiers capabilities

Mr. Netanyahu's political ally Natan Sharansky said the corruption scandal that rocked their government showed the prime minister had yet to prove he can lead the country.

The Israeli newspapers Yediot Ahronot and Maariv published interviews on Friday with Trade and Industry Minister Sharansky, a 49-year-old former Soviet dissident whose party has the power to bring down the 11-month-old government.

Asked what was the most critical thing he could say about Mr. Netanyahu, Mr. Sharansky said: "He thinks we're functionaries. Meanwhile he hasn't proven he knows how to lead a government. That's a huge shortcoming... What can be more serious than saying a prime minister doesn't know how to utilise his reservoir of ministers?"

Asked why that was, Mr. Sharansky said: "You must ask a psychologist."

Mr. Sharansky said by staying in the government he hoped to accentuate Mr. Netanyahu's strong points and neutralise his shortcomings. He said he was convinced Mr. Netanyahu wanted to improve his performance.

"The moment we get the impression it's lip service, and I don't believe that will be the case, we will be out."

Sharansky's seven Knesset seat Yisrael B'aliya Party this week persuaded Mr. Netanyahu to set up a committee to examine every appointment and government conduct. The party has enough clout to wipe out Mr. Netanyahu's 66-54 seat majority in parliament.

After nine years in Soviet prisons, Mr. Sharansky won his freedom in an East-West prisoner swap in 1986 and arrived in Israel to a hero's welcome. He emerged a big winner in Israeli elections last May after shunning politics for a decade.



Former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker is greeted by Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmad Attaf, on Friday, upon his arrival at Algiers airport. Mr. Baker arrived here on a mission for U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to resurrect peace talks between Algeria and Morocco over the disputed territory of Western Sahara (AFP photo)

James Baker on Western Sahara peace mission

ALGIERS (AFP) — Former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker arrived Friday on a mission for U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to resurrect peace talks between Algeria and Morocco over the disputed territory of Western Sahara.

Mr. Baker flew in from Morocco after two meetings with King Hassan II about the possibilities of finding a political settlement for the mineral-rich former Spanish colony which Morocco annexed 22 years ago.

Mr. Baker, who was named Mr. Annan's personal envoy for Western Sahara last month, was expected to travel later to Tindouf in southern Algeria, where leaders of the Algerian-backed Polisario Front are based.

The front has proclaimed its own Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in the territory.

Mr. Baker said when he arrived in Morocco Wednesday that he would visit Rabat, Tindouf, Algiers and the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott to listen to assess the problems standing in the way of a U.N.-sponsored settlement.

During a visit to the United Nations in New York for consultations earlier this month, Mr. Baker said it was premature to envisage changes to a U.N. peace plan providing for a referendum on the future of the territory.

The referendum, backed by the U.N. Security Council in 1990, would determine whether Western Sahara should become part of Morocco or an independent state.

With a U.N.-monitored ceasefire holding since September 1991, a resolution to the conflict has been put on the international community's back burner for the past year.

The military conflict had already eased off in the late 1980s and the Moroccans have built defensive walls in the desert. However, the two sides are in total disagreement about who should be allowed to take part in the self-determination referendum.

Until recently, Polisario stood by the 1974 census carried out by Spain, the former colonial ruler, fixing the number of Western Sahara voters at around 74,000.

However, the Moroccan authorities want to add some 100,000 other people variously connected with the territory.

U.N. spokesman Juan Carlos Brandt said Mr. Baker would make "a fresh assessment of the situation" during his mission, expected to last until the end of the month.

U.N. plans for the identification of voters in the referendum have been on hold for the past 12 months amid disagreements over who would be entitled to take part.

"If there could be a resolution of this problem, there could be not just economic benefits for the region and for the parties involved but political benefits as well," said Mr. Baker.

Western diplomats said Monday that Mr. Baker could assess the chances of a resumption of direct talks between the Polisario Front and Morocco, which could move forward the peace process.

However, Morocco publicly insists that developments must take place within the framework of the U.N. peace plan.

Algeria, which has traditionally supported the Polisario Front, faces a major internal conflict between armed extremists and the secular authorities, which has claimed an estimated 60,000 lives since early 1992.

Opposition Iranian candidate promises better ties with U.S.

TEHRAN (AFP) — A liberal Iranian opposition figure seeking to run for the upcoming presidential election has called for normalised relations between Iran and its arch enemy, the United States, the official IRNA news agency said Friday.

Ezatollah Sahabi said in a public speech on Thursday that there would be "no limitations in having relations with the U.S., short of dependence," should he get elected in the May 23 polls.

But he called on Washington to "remove its forces from the Persian Gulf to create a peaceful atmosphere for negotiations."

"We are opposed to the U.S. policy of dual containment of Iran and Iraq," said Mr. Sahabi, a veteran nationalist dissident and director of the liberal monthly, Iran Farda (Future Iran).

The United States has boosted its military presence in the region since the 1991 Gulf war, to protect oil-rich Gulf Arab countries from perceived threats from Tehran and Baghdad.

Tehran and Washington broke diplomatic ties after Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution which deposed the pro-American shah, and the two countries have been at sharp odds ever since.

The ruling Shiite Muslim clergy here deeply distrust the Americans and has ruled out any negotiations with the superpower.

Mr. Sahabi said he had decided to run for president to "fight the (Conservative clergy's) monopoly of power in Iran and for democracy and freedom." He would also try to pull his country out of "political isolation and remove tension in foreign relations," he said.

However, all the pretenders are to be tightly screened by the authorities before their candidacy is certain.

The main two hopefuls are parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri, who is backed by the Conservative clergy, and former Culture Minister Mohammad Khatami, an Islamic intellectual favoured both by moderates and radical left-wingers.

Mr. Sahabi acknowledged that he was unlikely to be elected, but said he hoped Mr. Khatami would win in the first round.

He argued that the ruling Conservative clergy was supported by only 12 per cent of the people, and complained that he was not given equal campaign opportunity.

"Even publications whose views are closer to ours do not publish my public speeches or statements," charged Mr. Sahabi, whose Thursday's speech was advertised in at least once mainstream newspaper.

Iran forces hit mock enemy in wargames

DUBAI (R) — Iranian Revolutionary Guards attacked an imaginary enemy in the Gulf on Thursday with ground, naval and air power in mock battles in the Islamic republic's largest wargames.

State-run Tehran Radio said paratroopers, backed by planes and helicopter gunships, landed behind "enemy" lines near the port of Bandar Abbas at the mouth of the Gulf, surrounding the "aggressors" and taking them prisoner.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who is also armed forces commander-in-chief, urged the troops to take part in the mock battles as if it they were real, "even though the probability that events such as these wargames would actually occur is very low," the radio said.

He was talking as troops were preparing to land on Iran's Qeshm and Hengam islands to confront an occupying "enemy."

Mr. Khamenei on Tuesday urged Iranians to be vigilant but added that no world power would dare attack Iran because, he said, enemies knew Iran's government enjoyed wide popular support.

The remarks were an apparent reference to reports that the United States might strike at the country if a link was established between Tehran and a bombing in June that killed 19 U.S. airmen in Saudi Arabia. Iran denies involvement.

A U.S. Navy official in the Gulf earlier on Thursday said the navy was watching the exercises closely, dismissing a Tehran report that U.S. warships had left *regions near Iranian waters* since the start of the wargames.

"We have changed nothing," the U.S. Navy official said. "As at any time during an exercise we are watching it very closely and we can do that in a variety of means, not just ships.

"The fifth fleet has not changed its operations as a result of the exercise. As of this morning there are still 20 ships assigned to the fifth fleet," he told Reuters.

The U.S. Navy keeps a force of about 20 warships *in the Gulf to enforce sanctions* on Iraq and protect Gulf Arab states.

The amphibious wargames, codenamed "Tareq Al Quds" (Road to Jerusalem), involve 200,000 members of the guards, set up after Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution, and Basij Militia volunteers.

Tehran has been training the guards to become a rapid deployment force.

Planned since last year, they are designed to test ability to counter simultaneous threats in Iran's west *and south*.

They cover 2,000 kilometres across four provinces stretching from the mouth of the Gulf to the border with Iraq, Iran's enemy in an eight-year war which ended in 1988.

Eritrea denies role in Sudanese civil war

NAIROBI (AFP) — Eritrea's ruling party denied Friday that the Horn of Africa nation was involved in Sudan's "internal wars," calling an AFP report of a speech by President Issaias Afeworki on Thursday a "gross distortion" that came as the Sudanese newspaper Akhbar Al Yom quoted Deputy Musa Hussein Dirar as saying after a visit to the border region that Sudanese soldiers had been battling more than 5,000 "Eritrean invaders led by white foreigners, including some Israelis" in Sudan's Red Sea state.

An AFP correspondent who was present at the Seminar for Civil Servants addressed by the Eritrean president in Asmara on Thursday quoted Mr. Afeworki as acknowledging that Eritrean troops were in Sudan and had suffered "some losses."

That report led to Sudanese Information Minister and official spokesman Al Tayeb Ibrahim Mohammad Khair to declare that Mr. Afeworki's comments were "tantamount to a declaration of war."

The ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), said in a statement faxed to AFP by the Eritrean embassy in Nairobi that Mr. Afeworki had elaborated on the Khartoum regime's "acts of regional destabilisation and subversion" and "reiterated the government's policy of sympathy and support, in conjunction with its regional partners, to the democratic opposition in the Sudan."

But it added: ... "the Eritrean PFDJ categorically rejects all allegations or insinuations that seek to establish Eritrea's involvement in Sudan's internal wars."

The Sudanese opposition Umma Party reported from Asmara that Mr. Afeworki had said that Eritrean forces were fighting "on *the Sudan-Eritrea border*" against Eritreans belonging to the Islamic Jihad and who had been sent by the Khartoum regime of President Omar Al Bashir "to destabilise security and stability" in Eritrea.

Mubarak plays down Sudan's peace deal

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Thursday played down the peace agreement between the government in neighbouring Sudan and six southern factions, saying it did not involve the main opposition factions.

The government "did not sign an agreement with the Sudanese opposition," Mr. Mubarak said during a meeting with Egyptian army officers.

"They got small tribes (to sign) but the opposition, such as the Umma and Democratic Unionist Parties and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) still exists," he said.

The South Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM), led by Riek Machar, and the SPLA's Bahr Al Ghazal group of Kerbino Kuanyen were the largest of six southern factions to sign Monday's pact.

However, government troops are still at war with the mainstream SPLA, which is carrying out an offensive in the south and east and has formed an alliance with the political opposition in exile.

The SPLA, which has been fighting to free mainly animist and Christian southern Sudan from domination by the Islamist north since 1983, dismissed the peace pact as a bid to boost the low morale of Sudanese government troops.

The accord provides for a referendum on self-determination in the south after four years.

Holland says Turkish-EU membership 'in the distant future'

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo declared Thursday he saw Turkey joining the European Union (EU) "in the distant future."

Speaking before the Netherlands' parliamentary commission on foreign affairs, Mr. Van Mierlo — whose country currently holds the rotating EU presidency — said, "for my part, I see Ankara becoming a member in the distant future, if (Turkey) satisfies the required criteria."

His statement echoes statements made to the Turkish press Wednesday, when he said he was certain Turkey would become part of the EU but it would take a long time due to its widely-criticised human rights record, its rifts with Greece, the Cyprus question and problems regarding its economy.

It also follows a comment April 6 by leading Dutch legislator Fritz Bolkestein, who said "the entry of Turkey into the union would mean the end of the European Union."

Referring to Mr. Bolkestein's words, Mr. Van Mierlo asked, "Does he mean the Turks will never enter just because they're Turks?" and warned, "I don't advise repeating that out loud."

Mr. Van Mierlo led a diplomatic mission earlier this month attempting to get Turkey and Greece back on talking terms.

COLUMN

Man faces 50 years for shooting pie-eater

BATON ROUGE (R) — A 41-year-old Louisiana man faces up to 50 years in prison after being convicted of shooting his girlfriend's brother for eating a slice of his lemon meringue pie. Lester "Bear" Bryant was convicted of attempted second-degree murder for shooting Paul Thomas in the chest last August for eating a piece of the pie he had warned everyone in his house not to touch. Thomas made a full recovery. Prosecutor Tony Clayton said after the trial that the verdict showed local residents would not stand for violence over a piece of lemon meringue pie. "However, if it were a piece of my mama's apple pie, it might have been a different verdict," Clayton said.

Woman gives birth at 63

LOS ANGELES (R) — Doctors who treated the oldest woman ever to give birth brushed aside the fact that she lied about her age, saying the 63-year-old first-time mother's achievement was a blow for sexual equality. "I would argue that this has been going on for a long time with men this just levels the playing field for women," said Richard Paulson, professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Southern California (USC). The professor heads USC's programme for assisted reproduction, which announced on Wednesday that a woman had given birth at the age of 63 years and nine months as a result of in-vitro fertilisation.

Koreans jailed for exorcism manslaughter

LOS ANGELES (R) — A South Korean missionary who beat a woman to death during a five-hour religious exorcism was sentenced to four years in prison for involuntary manslaughter. The dead woman's husband, Chung Jae-Whoa, received the minimum two-year term for his participation in the exorcism ceremony that led to Chung Kyung Jae's death last July 4. The exorcist, Choi Sung-Soo, was given the maximum sentence by Malibu Superior Court Judge James Albracht. He ruled last week after a non-jury trial that the two men were guilty of involuntary manslaughter, although prosecutors had wanted them convicted of second-degree murder.

Thai vice squad officer finds tables turned

BANGKOK (R) — A Thai policeman assigned to help remove vice from the notorious sex and sand resort of Pattaya found the tables turned when a woman he spent the night with stole his car and gun. Police said a woman had been arrested on charges of stealing the car, gun, mobile phone and other valuables from Private First Class Itthiphol Wanyu as he slept in a love motel. Itthiphol, a member of a task force sent to Pattaya a week ago to crack down on vice, had met the woman Wednesday night and went to the motel with her. He woke up in the morning to find the woman gone, along with his possessions and his car. "The suspect said she had just driven the car around to show her friends but Itthiphol insisted that she meant to steal from him so we had to detain her," a police officer said.